



ACT
Government

DRAFT CANBERRA URBAN LAKES AND PONDS LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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Telephone: 02 6207 1923

Website: www.environment.act.gov.au

Email environmentprotectionpolicy@act.gov.au

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INTRODUCTION

This report captures and responds to comments, concerns and ideas that were raised during consultation on the draft Canberra Urban Lakes and Ponds Land Management Plan (the LMP).

The water quality and ecology of urban lakes, ponds and wetlands is a reflection of the pond size, catchment condition and management regime.

Catchment land use (parklands, residential, industrial, commercial) and management practices (mowing, street cleaning, fertiliser application, etc.), including flow retardation and pollutant interception measures, impact on the pattern and form of water delivery and pollutant loading on the lakes, ponds and wetlands, driving their water quality and ecology. The shape and size of the waterbody further modifies the dominant water quality and ecological processes.

As prescribed in the Planning and Development Act 2007 (the Act) Canberra's two urban lakes (Lake Burley Griffin is managed by the National Capital Authority) and many ponds and wetlands are managed to:

1. prevent and control floods by providing a reservoir to receive flows from rivers, creeks and urban run-off
2. prevent and control pollution of waterways
3. provide for public use of the lake or pond for recreation
4. provide habitat for fauna and flora.

Canberra's urban waterbodies contribute to our city's distinctive character as the nation's 'city in the landscape' and contributes significantly to the liveability of our city. The waterbodies provide exceptional opportunities for nature-based experiences and active lifestyles that so many Canberrans value, contributing significantly to the health and wellbeing of the community.

The LMP outlines waterbody values, the planning framework under which they will be managed and how they will be managed to achieve the management objectives over the next ten years. It attempts to balance the interests of all visitors to and users of the waterbodies while prioritising the hierarchy of the management objectives.

While the 2001 LMP remains a very contemporary document, with most updates being references to legislation and ACT Government agencies. The three substantial areas of change from the 2001 LMP are:

- » greater consideration of climate change impacts in the management of lakes and ponds
- » greater emphasis on heritage values
- » incorporation of the many urban ponds and wetlands that have been developed since 2001.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An extensive community consultation process was undertaken in order to hear the community's views on the draft LMP and incorporate them into the revised draft LMP where relevant and possible.

During the development of the draft LMP key stakeholders, including government agencies, community organisations and individuals, were consulted. The statutory six week public consultation period was opened on 21 February 2020 and was due to close on 3 April 2020. However, due to COVID-19, public consultation was ceased on 31 March 2020. Public consultation on the LMP was reopened from 28 August 2020 to 11 September 2020 in order to complete the statutory consultation period required under the Act.

Public consultation was hosted on the ACT Government's community engagement portal, YourSay.act.gov.au. The following tools were used to reach a wide demographic of Canberrans:

- » media release by the Minister for Planning and Land Management, Mick Gentleman MLA

- » social media on the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate Facebook accounts
- » posters at the waterbodies
- » posters and copies of the draft LMP at ACT libraries
- » emails to stakeholder groups.

The YourSay webpage included links to the draft LMP, an online survey and instructions for making submissions.

Forty-one submissions were received. Each submission was considered in revising the draft LMP. A summary of key changes is in the section below. The table below includes the summarised public comments and ACT Government response to the matters raised.

Following consultation, a Listening Report was published on the YourSay website to let the community know what we heard during the consultation.



SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES THAT RESPOND TO CONSULTATION

Public response to the draft LMP was generally favourable, with an average of 6.17 out of ten respondents indicating that the draft LMP adequately reflected Canberra's urban waterbodies and the desired management.

Many of the comments were of an editorial nature or required only minor changes to the text to clarify a particular issue. They have been incorporated into the revised draft LMP and are not included in this report.

Comments about operational issues that did not seek changes to the LMP were referred to Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) for consideration in operations planning and implementation.

Given the considerable support for the LMP to emphasise conservation over other activities, including requests for the management objectives to be re-ordered with conservation elevated to the primary management objective, it is clear that community expectations and the statutory management objectives are misaligned. Addressing this issue is beyond the scope of the review of the LMP and would require changes to the Act.

The Vision for Canberra's urban waterbodies has been revised to read:

To enrich local communities through the aesthetic, recreational, sporting, tourism, cultural and ecological values of lakes and ponds, and to provide opportunities for people to be involved in their use, care and management.

A vision draws on people's imagination, insight and wisdom to identify a future of great inspiration and foresight. A vision statement positions an organisation to look beyond day-to-day services, initiatives and issues in order to spearhead what could be or should be in the future. It can guide decision making by providing a framework in which objectives, strategies and services can be set.

While admirable, the vision statement does not negate the statutory management objectives. Therefore the draft LMP seeks to find the common ground between the vision statement and the management objectives.

Comments on native wildlife protection and management were a strong theme. Primarily, a strong response was received in favour of better habitat protection and enhancement for native fauna. The stocking of waterbodies with only native fish and yabbies was also raised and accepted.

It was suggested that waterbodies could be managed to periodically dry out to help control aquatic weeds. Additional comments regarding the prevalence of aquatic weeds were also received. While it is noted that weed management is an ongoing issue in urban waterbodies, it is not appropriate to periodically dry the various waterbodies as a means of weed control.

Some submissions raised concerns about the increasing urbanisation of land in close proximity to Canberra's lakes, ponds and wetlands. This issue is hard to address given the artificial nature of the urban waterbodies and the well defined land planning framework in the ACT.

Recreational opportunities and facilities for activities such as kayaking, canoeing, swimming, fishing, cycle/walking paths and outdoor gyms were also raised. The provision of recreational facilities and opportunities is decided on an individual waterbody basis. As such, all suggestions have been forwarded to TCCS for consideration.

There was strong support for the ACT Government's better maintenance of, and waste removal from, waterbodies. These comments have been referred to TCCS for appropriate action. However, it is worth noting that there was also strong support for greater community involvement in the management of the waterbodies through the establishment of an 'adopt-a-wetland' network. What is not clear is if there is an opportunity to efficiently meet both objectives, with adopt-a-wetland groups being established to help with jobs like litter removal and weed control, or if there is an expectation that these issues be better addressed by government to then allow for adopt-a-wetland groups to then undertake a select range of activities.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Habitat management	Include islands in new or drained lakes and ponds for predator proof nesting and refuge for turtles and water birds.	Agreed, where appropriate – while the benefit of predator free islands to native wildlife is recognise, not all ponds and wetlands are large or deep enough to include islands. Smaller ponds/wetlands may accommodate an isthmus (alternative habitat refuge to islands) which can also assist flow circulation throughout the pond/wetland to prevent short-circuiting of flow, maximising water quality treatment outcomes.
	Stock with native fish, yabbies and shrimp.	Canberra's lakes and ponds are only stocked with native fish (Murray Cod and Golden Perch) as part of implementation of the Fish Stocking Plan for the ACT 2015-2020. Other native species – Western Carp Gudgeon and Galaxias – are also suitable for shallow ponds with highly variable temperatures.
	People feeding bread to waterbirds. Should install signs discouraging the feeding of birds at every wetland. The deleterious effects of feeding birds, on both the birds' health, and on water quality, need to be made clear.	TCCS is currently considering options for addressing this issue. Options include raising public awareness of the negative impacts feeding wild birds has on bird health as well as water quality. Signs are often ineffective in changing behaviour.
	Feral domestic duck species should continue to be removed from waterbodies. These birds interbreed with native species, in particular the Pacific Black Duck.	Noted. TCCS relocates feral bird populations if the population proves to be detrimental to the habitat or recreational values of the water body where they are located.
	Urban lakes and storm water ponds are important for wildlife during drought. According to waterwatch data, during drought urban waterbodies keep the highest level of water quality and highest diversity of macroinvertebrates. They need to be seen as a refuge for wildlife during drought and in buffering from harsh conditions.	Agreed. The provision of habitat for flora and fauna is the fourth statutory management objective for the Lakes and Ponds LMP.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Weed control and cleaning/maintenance	Wetlands should have water levels controlled to allow for occasional or regular drying - control of water plants by drying is much more efficient than physical or chemical control.	Noted – Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) include valves to control water levels in ponds, wetlands and biofiltration systems. Level control valves are important requirements for maintenance activities and to manage stormwater harvesting.
	The physical management of and the removal of debris build up in the ponds will have a significant impact for the future cleanliness of these areas.	A cleaning schedule for Canberra's urban lakes and ponds is in place. Litter picking and removal of debris within the lakes occurs four times per year. Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) protecting lakes and large ponds are each cleaned a minimum of four times a year, and up to eight times if required, pending storm events. Additional street sweeping is being undertaken to address point source pollution of organic matter (leaf fall) as a preventative measure. Some ponds require clearing of silt/sediment at the inlet of the assets and a program is being developed to address its removal.
	Rubbish is a serious problem at a number of ponds I visit frequently. There is irregular cleaning of rubbish/silt traps at places such as Isabella Pond. More attention needs to be put into rubbish removal.	MIS now require new ponds/wetlands to accommodate a sediment forebay at the inlet of the asset, enabling capture of silt/sediment within an easily accessible asset to enable more frequent cleaning.
	The LMP does not state how often waterbodies will be cleaned.	
	In Table 2, Management Objective 4, "Provide habitat for fauna and flora" add, "including mowing regimes" to Provision and enhancement of landscape values: Consider as part of development and maintenance programs.	Agreed.
Recreational activities	Management of specific lakes and ponds: the Activities section of some lakes in this section is confusing – fishing and recreational boating (non motorised) are allowed, while other activities are subject to permit, including recreational boating (steam and electric) travelling over 10 knots, recreational boating (petroleum driven) travelling over 10 knots.	This relates to Declared Lakes under the Lakes Act 1976 . The Act permits motorised boating without a permit if the boat travels less than 10 knots. The LMP details those areas where boating is permitted, including through a permit. As some lakes and ponds are Declared Lakes, which permits boating, a permit can be applied for to use a boat which travels at greater than 10 knots.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Recreational activities	Mixed use sites are becoming speed ways for cyclists with little or no regard for other users as they fly past on the walkway.	The ACT government does not sign a speed limit for bicycles on paths or shared paths. This is because bicycles typically do not have a speedometer and because such a sign would be practically unenforceable. Instead, TCCS install a behavioural sign that reminds cyclists and pedestrians that they need to share the path and of the behaviours that are expected of each user, such as keeping dogs under control and cyclists using a bell to warn of their approach.
	More native fish stocking and carp removal and specialist bins around lakes and ponds to dispose of carp so they aren't left rotting on the shoreline	Canberra's lakes and ponds are only stocked with native fish (Murray Cod and Golden Perch) as part of implementation of the Fish Stocking Plan for the ACT 2015-2020 . Specialist bins for the disposal of carp are not being considered at this time.
	The use of drones at various wetland areas is increasing and unregulated.	Noted. Like all states and territories, the ACT has no power to regulate drone flights, which fall exclusively under Commonwealth law. The Commonwealth Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has exclusive regulatory responsibility for the safe operation of all commercial and recreational drones throughout Australia. CASA is responsible for granting drone licences, sometimes including bespoke conditions, and is responsible for enforcing regulations and responding to any breaches. ACT agencies do not have a role in managing or enforcing these requirements. To find out more about how drones may be operated by recreational and commercial users across Australia, visit https://www.casa.gov.au/drones
	There are well-known benefits for physical and mental health if people engage with the natural environment. Providing onsite information about the wildlife would enhance visitors' experiences.	Noted. Will be considered as part of any future works.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Recreational activities	More shade	<p>TCCS is currently undertaking a significant tree planting program to increase canopy cover in the ACT. Should members of the public wish to request a tree planting, they can go to the Fix My Street page on the ACT Government Website at www.act.gov.au/fixmystreet or via Access Canberra on 13 22 81 so prompt action can be taken.</p> <p>The ACT Government has recently released an interactive map to help people identify potential tree planting sites across the city. If a member of the public has noticed other locations in need of more tree plantings, they can visit the Your Say website at https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/trees-act/tree-planting-across-cbr</p>
	I use Lake Gininderra walking trail regularly. It is widely used by joggers, walkers and bicyclers. Two issues: the pedestrian paths are bit narrow at places. The lighting is an issue, especially at the car park at Macdormatt Place.	<p>Lighting: Roads ACT contractor inspected the site and advised the carpark lights are working, however there appears an insufficient number of light poles which will be further investigated under our Roads ACT lighting infill program.</p> <p>Path width: Roads ACT use a Warrant System to confirm the need for, and priorities of all requests to build missing links or to upgrade existing paths. A Roads ACT officer will inspect the area and assess for consideration in the path infill program.</p>
	Needs to show more activities which people like to do at ponds. Ponds should be something for everyone.	The LMP includes a table of the various activities that can be undertaken in and around urban waterbodies. Further detail is needed to address specific interests.
	Access and facilities for small kayaks and canoes.	Noted.
	Canberra has the largest kayak club in ACT/ NSW, yet there is no mention of competitive kayaking as a use of Molonglo Reach, Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra. By not including kayak events in the management plan there is the risk that future events will not be supported through management of the water courses.	<p>Kayaking events are allowed under permit as 'special events and commercial activities' at the mentioned waterbodies.</p> <p>Recreational kayaking is allowed in waterbodies where 'recreational boating (non-motorised)' is permitted.</p>

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Water quality	There is not enough recognition that the health of the lakes depends on the quality of the water that goes into them. While the focus of the document is on the lakes themselves, it needs to recognise that the quality of water entering the lakes can be improved.	This is beyond the scope of the LMP. The LMP covers lentic or still waterbodies (lakes, ponds and wetlands) within the Parks and Recreation Zones in the Territory Plan. Through the H2OK program the ACT Government has provided significant investment into improving and maintaining an integrated hydrological system within the ACT and broader region.
	Should recognise that lakes are only a very small part of earlier ACT landscape. Creeks, permanent and intermittent, and small ponds and swamps were a much more prominent part of the earlier landscape. Where possible these need to be restored to both improve water quality, and to provide habitat for many plants and animals.	
	Greater explanation of integration with this plan other aspects of Urban waterways such as rain gardens, rivers, creeks and streams.	
	Does not seem to say explicitly that leaf litter and grass clippings significantly contribute to the problem of blue green algae.	On page 7 it is stated that ‘The urban stormwater discharges are high in litter, suspended solids, organic matter, nutrients and bacteria (refer Figure 2).’ And then provides further detail of how these factors contribute to algal blooms and other waterway health issues. There is a section on mowing (grass clippings) and impacts on waterways on page 65.
	There should also be something in there about not planting deciduous trees along lake foreshores.	Municipal Infrastructure Standard 25 identifies appropriate plant species for urban public unleased land in the ACT managed by TCCS, including open spaces adjacent to water bodies.
	Little mention is made of problems associated with green algae e.g. smells and being potentially hazardous to dogs and humans.	Algae is mentioned twenty-three times in the LMP.
	There is a disconnect in the plan between stormwater and water quality entering urban lakes and ponds and this needs to be better articulated.	There is a chapter on stormwater management on page 24.
	Attention to areas of poor water quality entry into lakes need remedial focus, especially downstream of gross pollution traps.	The Planning and Development Act 2007 lists ‘prevent and control pollution of waterways’ as the second highest management objective of lakes and ponds.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
Community involvement	Catchment Groups that can coordinate activities, need long-term financial support.	This is beyond the scope of the LMP.
	The mention of 'adopt-a-wetland' groups is encouraging. However, how this will be delivered is unclear and the articulation of concrete actions for the facilitation of on-ground community participation would assist future planning.	Agreed. A separate, finer scale, plan will need to be developed when/if this initiative is progressed.
	A clear implementation plan for a program to engage the community to care for local ponds would be beneficial.	
	Create a fifth management objective "Partnership with the Community", rather than attempting to fit it into the third management objective "Provide for public use and recreation".	The management objectives are as stated in the Planning and Development Act 2007. Changes to the objectives can therefore only be done through reviewing the Act.
	Recognise the existing and ongoing role of the community in improving water quality in the section "Water Quality and the Community".	Water Quality and the Community was a research project undertaken by the University of Canberra. The findings of this report can not be changed.
General comments	Community perspectives: This section is a mixture of how the community sees waterways, and threats to wetland values and condition. These perspectives could be expressed separately to define the benefits and threats.	Noted – however, this information, including the four dot points referred to, is an overview of the report Water Quality and the Community: understanding the views, values and actions of residents of the ACT and surrounding region (Schirmer and Mylek 2016), therefore further detail can be gained from the original report.
	The LMP intends to cover lakes, ponds and wetlands. However, the newly constructed wetlands have not been included, or at least are not listed in Appendix 2.	The list of neighbourhood ponds at Appendix B was comprehensive at the time of preparation. As ponds and wetlands continue to be established in Canberra, it is impossible to constantly update the LMP to reflect this development. As such, there is a note at the end of Appendix B stating that all future waterbodies are to be managed in accordance with the LMP.
	Purpose of the Plan talks about 'providing performance indicators to monitor the plan', but the plan seems to be an outline of what is without saying very much of what will happen.	City Presentation monitors performance against operational plans for lake and pond cleaning and maintenance.
	Clarification on whether all ACT Healthy Waterways sites classified as ponds, wetlands, or rain gardens fall under this management plan. If management plans for these exist elsewhere it is difficult for the community to understand why this is the case.	The LMP covers lentic or still waterbodies (lakes, ponds and wetlands) within the Parks and Recreation Zone of the Territory Plan.

ISSUE	SUMMARISED COMMENT	RESPONSE
General comments	In Table 2: Management Objectives and Strategies, add an action related to the importance of education in achieving Objective 2 “Prevent and control pollution of waterways”	Agreed, education is important in preventing and controlling pollution, but it is beyond the scope of the LMP.
	It could be more honest. The government has done nothing to the lakes for years.	The LMP is a forward looking document and therefore how the ACT Government aims to manage urban waterbodies, rather than being reflective on how they have been managed in the past.
	Little information is given regarding urban development of the water fronts of the Territory's lakes and Molonglo Reach. Any plans to build tall buildings within 200 m of the water frontage need careful consideration by experts in micro-meteorology and fluid dynamics or Canberra will lose major tourism dollars through sporting events.	The LMP is limited to waterbodies in the Parks and Recreation Zone of the Territory Plan as urban development in other land use zones are addressed in other plans/statutory documents.
	Doesn't consider management of land surrounding the lake or local flood plains with regards to sell off to developers.	
	The LMP outlines management objectives but it was not clear how the ACT Government propose to manage these areas. There was no mention of the potential impact to LBG resulting from management of Kingston Harbour or Molonglo Reach.	Lake Burley Griffin is the responsibility of the National Capital Authority and therefore outside the scope of this LMP. That said, Kingston Foreshore and Molonglo Reach are to be managed in a way consistent with the LMP and therefore with minimal impact on Lake Burley Griffin.
	The review of the LMP shouldn't be allowed to become so overdue.	Agreed.



