

# Nature Conservation (Review of Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012) Public Consultation Notice 2025 (No 2)

Notifiable instrument NI2025-153

made under the

Nature Conservation Act 2014, s 189 (Reserve management plan—review), s 179 (Draft reserve management plan – public consultation)

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## 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Nature Conservation (Review of Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012) Public Consultation Notice 2025 (No 2)*.

## 2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

## 3 Reserve management plan review

The custodian has reviewed the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012. The *Review of the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012* (the **review**) is set out at schedule 1 of this instrument.

## 4 Details of public consultation

- (1) I invite written submissions from anyone about the review. Submissions may be sent to:  

Director, Parks Planning and Policy  
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Email: [ParksPlanning@act.gov.au](mailto:ParksPlanning@act.gov.au)
- (2) Submissions may be given on the review during the period starting on the commencement day of this instrument and ending on 16 May 2025.
- (3) The review and the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012 can be viewed online at <http://www.environment.act.gov.au>.

## **5 Revocation**

This instrument revokes Notifiable Instrument NI2025–72 *Nature Conservation (Review of Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012) Public Consultation Notice 2025*.

Michaela Watts  
Executive Branch Manager, ACT Parks and Conservation Service  
Custodian  
27 March 2025



# Review of the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012

ACT Parks and Conservation Service



## HAVE YOUR SAY:

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate welcomes your comments on the Review of the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012.

## YOU CAN MAKE COMMENTS BY:

Emailing: [ParksPlanning@act.gov.au](mailto:ParksPlanning@act.gov.au)

Post: Director, Parks Planning and Policy  
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate  
PO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601

Enquiries: Access Canberra on 13 22 81

## COMMENTS CAN BE MADE UNTIL 16 MAY 2025.

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## **Traditional Custodian Acknowledgment**

*Yuma*

*Dhawura nguna ngurumbangu gunangu Ngunnawal. Nginggada dindi dhawura Ngunnawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin. Mura bidji mulanggaridjindjula. Naraganawaliyiri yarabindjula.*

*Hello*

*This country is Ngunnawal (ancestral/spiritual) homeland. We all always respect elders, male and female, as well as Ngunnawal country itself. They always keep the pathways of their ancestors alive. They walk together as one.*

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

## **Photographs**

All photographs: ACT Parks and Conservation Service

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# 1. Background

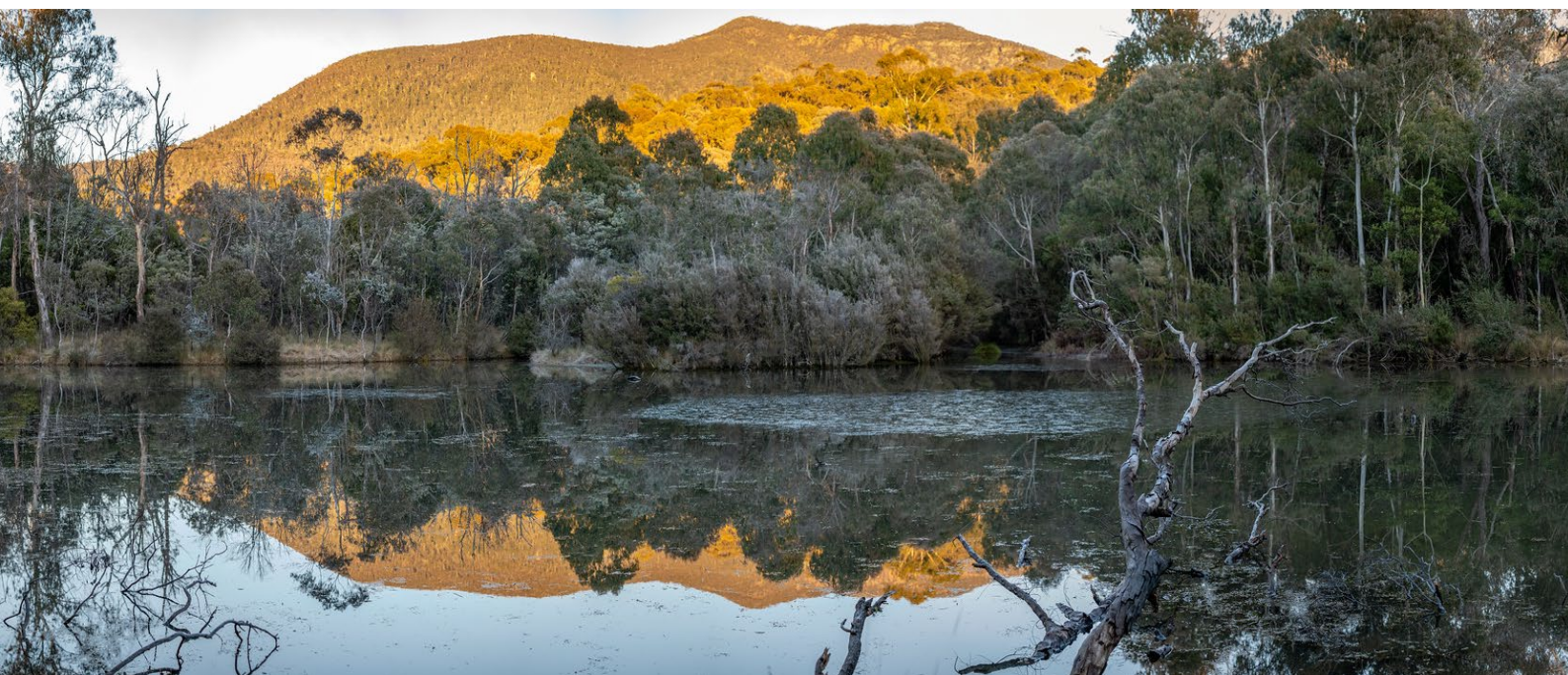
Tidbinbilla is managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) and comprises Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Jedbinbilla, and Gibraltar. It is located in the north-west quadrant of the ACT about 40 km from the Canberra city centre and forms part of the Australian Alps National Parks, a series of National Heritage Listed parks and reserves in that span Australia's high country in Victoria, NSW and the ACT.

Tidbinbilla is a place of historical and ongoing significance to the Ngunnawal people, the Traditional Custodians of the Canberra region. Evidence of Ngunnawal occupation of the Canberra region stretches back over tens of thousands of years and their cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters continues today.

A wide range of native wildlife and plants occur across Tidbinbilla in diverse habitats including wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, wet and dry forests and woodlands. The Tidbinbilla Valley also reflects the European history of the area. Century old, rammed earth cottages, and evidence of farming and eucalyptus oil distillation are reminders of the pioneers who made a life there from the mid-1800s through to the 1950s and 60s.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is one of Canberra's most iconic and visited natural attractions, offering visitors the opportunity to connect with Ngunnawal culture, and to learn about and experience the region's ecology, flora and fauna. Popular recreation activities include bushwalking, orienteering, mountain biking, and guided activities. There are also regular opportunities for volunteering, outdoor education and research.

Tidbinbilla's Threatened Species Program includes research and captive breeding for conservation of the Southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, Northern Corroboree Frog and Grassland Earless Dragon. State of the art facilities, including a fully equipped veterinary surgery, support the success of the program.



**The Sanctuary, Tidbinbilla.**



## 2. Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012

The current [Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012](#) (the 2012 Plan) came into effect on 30 November 2012, replacing the first management plan released in 1999. The 2012 Plan was prepared to meet the requirement of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* that management plans be prepared for public land under the ACT Territory Plan. The 2012 Plan provides information on Tidbinbilla's values, the objectives for management and the actions to achieve these objectives over a 10-year period.

The 2012 Plan was prepared by the ACT Territory and Municipal Services Directorate for the 'Tidbinbilla Precinct', which included Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Jedbinbilla, Gibraltar, and Birrigai (Figure 1). At the time the Plan was drafted, the four public land areas comprised National Park and Special Purpose Reserve, which had the following management objectives under the *Planning and Development Act 2007*.

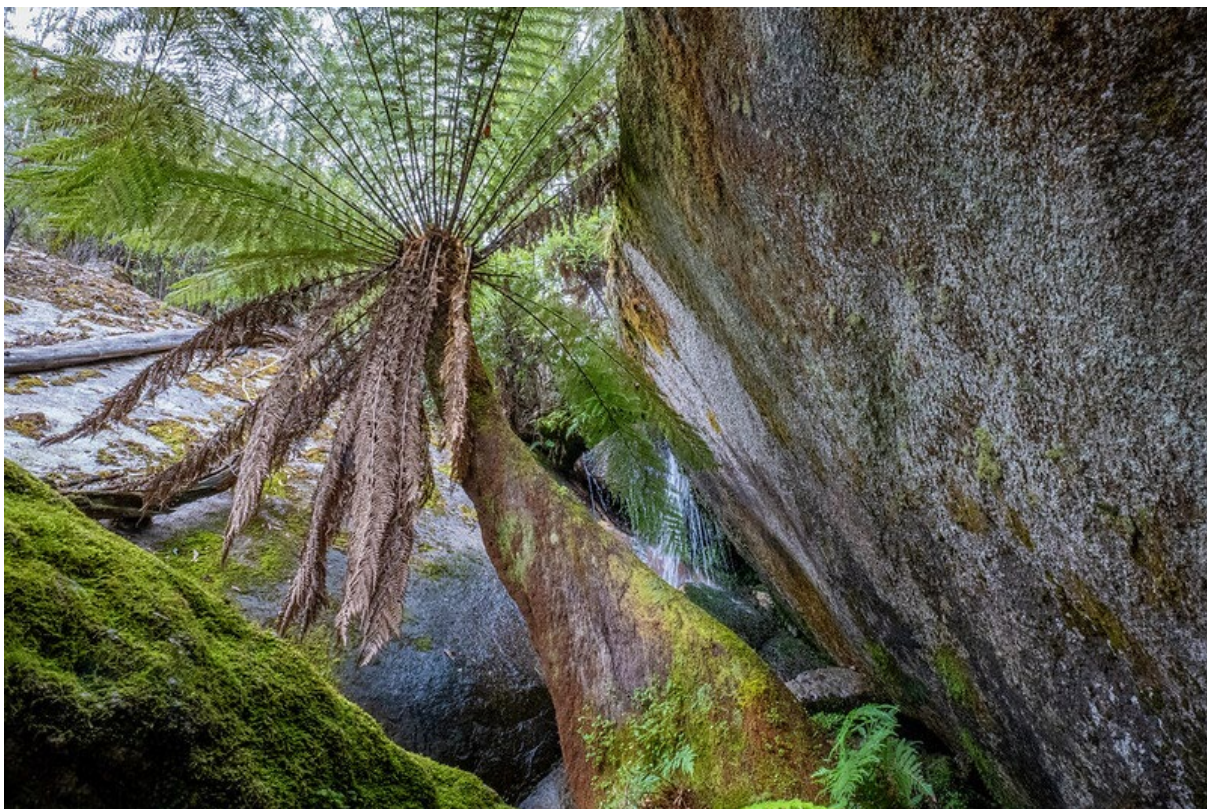
**National Park (NP) – Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Gibraltar**

- a) to conserve the natural environment*
- b) to provide for public use of the area for recreation, education and research*

**Special Purpose Reserve (SPR) – Jedbinbilla and Birrigai**

- *to provide for public and community use of the area for recreation and education*

The same objectives are retained for these public land categories under the *Planning Act 2023* (Planning Act).



Cascades Trail, Tidbinbilla.





## 2.1 Administrative and management changes

In 2016, the PCS was transferred from the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate (TCCS) to the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). Birrigai remained in TCCS and Birrigai's formal partnership with ACT PCS ceased. Birrigai is now managed as the 'Birrigai Outdoor School' by the ACT Education Directorate. For this reason, Birrigai and any objectives or actions in the 2012 Plan relating to it are outside the scope of this review.

The former weather station at Tidbinbilla has been decommissioned and infrastructure removed by the Bureau of Meteorology. Components of the 2012 Plan relevant to the weather station are also outside the scope of this review.

In this document, the term 'Tidbinbilla' is used to describe three management areas: Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Jedbinbilla and Gibraltar.

## 2.2 Legislative, policy and program changes

Since the 2012 Plan was released, new and updated legislation, policies, and programs have been developed and now apply to Tidbinbilla's ongoing management. In drafting a new Reserve Management Plan (RMP) for Tidbinbilla, consideration of the following legislation, policies, program plans and strategies will be required:

### Legislation

- [\*Nature Conservation Act 2014\*](#)
- [\*Planning Act 2023\*](#)
- [\*Biosecurity Act 2023\*](#)
- [\*ACT Heritage Act 2004 \(amended 2024\)\*](#)

### Policies, program plans and strategies

- [\*ACT Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy 2018\*](#)
- [\*ACT Biosecurity Strategy 2016–2026\*](#)
- [\*ACT Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan 2020\*](#)
- [\*ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019–25\*](#)
- [\*ACT Native Woodland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans 2019\*](#)
- [\*ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013–2023\*](#)
- [\*ACT Pest Animal Management Strategy 2012–2022\*](#)
- [\*ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Strategy 2019–2024\*](#)
- [\*Best Practice Management Guide for Rabbits in the ACT 2015\*](#)
- [\*Eastern Grey Kangaroo: Controlled Native Species Management Plan 2017\*](#)
- [\*Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations 2019\*](#)
- [\*Emergencies \(Emergency Plan\) 2023\*](#)
- [\*EPSDD Science Plan 2020–2025\*](#)
- [\*Invasive Plants Implementation Plan 2020–2025\*](#)
- [\*Regional Fire Management Plan 2012–2028\*](#) and [\*Bushfire Operations Plans\*](#)
- The Jedbinbilla Ecological Plan of Management (internal)
- Jedbinbilla Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Species Management Plan (internal)
- [\*Updates to action plans for threatened species and ecological communities\*](#)
- [\*ACT Wellbeing Framework\*](#)

### 3. Purpose of review

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (the NC Act), the custodian of a reserve must review an RMP every 10 years and any other time at the Minister's request. The purpose of this review is to:

- assess the adequacy of the 2012 Plan as the primary planning document for the reserve going forward (Section 4)
- determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the 2012 Plan in achieving its objectives (Section 6).

This review was drafted by the PCS, in consultation with relevant PCS staff, the Office of Nature Conservation (ONC), other EPSDD staff, and with input from other key stakeholders. Public consultation on this review will help to identify issues that are important to the community for consideration in a new RMP.

Following public consultation, work will commence to develop a new RMP for Tidbinbilla using a new Values-Based Management (VBM) approach.



Koala (Gula) (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) at the Eucalyptus Forest, Tidbinbilla.



## 4. Adequacy as a planning framework

The strengths and limitations of the 2012 Plan as a future planning framework are outlined below. The IUCN 'Adequacy of Primary Planning Document' assessment tool (Hockings *et al.* 2008) has also been completed and a summary is provided in Appendix 1.

### Strengths

The 2012 Plan includes the following key elements to guide effective management:

- broad management objectives, policies and actions for protecting Tidbinbilla's values
- a clear outline of the planning and management context, including international, national and regional agreements, and relevant strategies and policies
- information on the values, and the known and potential threats to these values.

### Limitations

The language used throughout the 2012 Plan requires revision and additional or revised information is required on the following issues:

- the current state of Tidbinbilla's operations, programs and volunteer and visitor experiences
- how an adaptive management approach can best be implemented
- the number and prioritisation of actions
- spatial information on Tidbinbilla's values and ecosystems
- boundary lines with neighbouring properties and public land, and the implications these have on management and operations
- how stakeholders are engaged throughout the planning process
- Ngannawal interpretation and connection to Country, and Ngannawal engagement on the management of Tidbinbilla
- observable impacts of, and potential future risks from, climate change, and adaptation measures
- guidance on European and Aboriginal cultural heritage protection and management
- objectives and actions for particular vegetation communities
- disaster resilience planning and preparedness, and standard operating procedures in place to protect values and assets.



**Smoky Mouse release (*Pseudomys fumeus*), Tidbinbilla.**

## 5. Reserve Zoning

The 2012 Plan defines primary management zones for Tidbinbilla. The purpose of introducing these zones was to specify the appropriate management and use of these areas in relation to the values.

Considerations for reserve zoning included:

- the application of the ACT legislative and planning framework for Tidbinbilla
- protection of natural and cultural heritage
- management of disturbed landscapes
- existing infrastructure, patterns of use and management arrangements
- land capability, considering constraints such as slope, presence of threatened species and/or ecological communities
- an asset protection zone for bushfires, and protection of the Tidbinbilla River corridor.

The zones defined in the 2012 Plan are:

- **Zone 1: Core Conservation** - Naturally vegetated mountains, rocky hills and slopes that form the boundary of the Tidbinbilla Valley and connect with Namadgi National Park (Namadgi) and other public land.
- **Zone 2: Conservation and Rehabilitation** – Jedbinbilla SPR and Gibraltar NP.
- **Zone 3: Developed Recreation and Education** - Built or developed recreation/education facilities and recreation nodes including Birrigai at Tidbinbilla, Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre, Ribbon Gum Theatre, Nature Discovery Playground, barbecue and picnic areas, the Sanctuary and other facilities in the Wildlife Precinct.

Considerations for a new RMP

- Updated public land categories for areas within Tidbinbilla.
- The zoning of Gibraltar Peak (given the high visitation rates).
- The inclusion of native grasslands in Zone 1: Core Conservation.
- Aligning Tidbinbilla's boundaries (including within-reserve zoning) with fence lines.
- Assign IUCN categories to areas within Tidbinbilla.



Grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*) on the Xanthorrhoea Loop Trail, Tidbinbilla.

## 6. Review against objectives

A review against the 2012 Plan's primary management objectives is completed below. This review highlights key achievements since the 2012 Plan became effective and provides key points for consideration for a new RMP. This assessment will help to ensure the content and management objectives of a new plan are fit for purpose and adhere to current best practice.

### 6.1 Community and Corporate Involvement

#### Primary management objectives

- Community and corporate partnerships are formed that effectively contribute to the management and operation of Tidbinbilla.
- Cooperative 'good neighbour' relationships are established between Tidbinbilla and adjacent landowners.

#### Volunteer, community and corporate partnerships

Community and corporate partnerships contribute to the preservation of Tidbinbilla's natural and cultural values and play an important role in ongoing management and reserve operations. Since 2012, significant changes to the administrative arrangements for community and corporate involvement across PCS reserves have occurred. Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has ceased existence in the ACT and their volunteer programs having moved into the PCS ParkCare initiative. ParkCare is facilitated by the PCS Volunteer and Visitor Experience team and is divided into four streams: VisitorAssist, WildlifeAssist, RangerAssist, and ParkCare Patch.

On weekends and public holidays, VisitorAssist volunteers engage with visitors to Tidbinbilla, providing them with important information about Tidbinbilla and the value of the reserve. During the school holidays, VisitorAssist volunteers also run free NaturePlay activities. WildlifeAssist volunteers work with the Threatened Species Program and Land Management teams to manage and care for native wildlife. This work includes supporting husbandry tasks, undertaking wildlife surveying and supporting key threatened species programs, including the Grassland Earless Dragon and Northern Corroboree Frog. Each month, rangers organise working parties with RangerAssist volunteers to undertake land management activities. Activities take place across Tidbinbilla and have included weeding and habitat restoration. Each year a number of ad-hoc working parties are organised for larger-scale operations, such as the periwinkle (*Vinca major*) removal and revegetation projects.

The Friends of Tidbinbilla are a ParkCare Patch group that undertakes a range of conservation and maintenance activities at Tidbinbilla. Each month, working bees are held at different sites and involve activities including weed control, track maintenance, erosion control, fauna surveys and maintenance of heritage sites. In addition, three sites at Tidbinbilla are monitored monthly to collect water quality data under the Waterwatch program, and volunteers participate in the annual FrogWatch program. In 2014, Friends of Tidbinbilla worked in partnership with the PCS to successfully obtain an ACT Heritage Grant. This grant allowed the group to develop five interpretation signs within the Nil Desperandum precinct, which now provide important information on Tidbinbilla's rich history.

The Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association are descendants of European families that lived around the Tidbinbilla and Tharwa valleys from the mid-1800s through to the 1960s. The group has a strong



and passionate connection to Tidbinbilla and heritage sites such as Rock Valley and Nil Desperandum homesteads and the re-created Tidbinbilla *Eucalyptus* Oil Distillery site. Members participate in biannual garden maintenance at Nil Desperandum and undertake restoration works at Rock Valley homestead. The Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association continues to play an important role in conservation of heritage at Tidbinbilla. With corporate support from the PCS, the association has been successful in obtaining numerous ACT Heritage Grants since 2012, contributing to the preservation of European heritage at Tidbinbilla. In 2022, the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association and PCS was awarded the National Trust of Australia's outstanding award for the '*Tidbinbilla Heritage Precinct*' project's significant contribution to the conservation of the heritage of the ACT.

### Neighbours

The PCS participates in planning and resource sharing with properties neighbouring Tidbinbilla. Tidbinbilla's Land Management team meets regularly with adjacent neighbours to discuss new weed incursions and emerging threats. In addition, Tidbinbilla's Land Management team, together with the EPSDD Rural Services Team, participates in community stakeholder forums to discuss land management topics relevant to lessees in Tidbinbilla Valley, including (but not limited to) containing livestock, fencing, roadside mowing, weed control, fulfilling requirements of Land Management Agreements, hazard reduction burning, and bushfire emergency preparedness and response.

Following the formal cessation of Birrigai's partnership with the PCS, an informal agreement was reached to allow Tidbinbilla's Land Management team to continue to maintain Birrigai Time Trail walking track and signage and undertake weed and pest management along the PCS and Birrigai boundary line. Management of the Birrigai Rock Shelter is an important matter for consideration in future planning, due to the site's location on the boundary of Tidbinbilla and Birrigai.

The ACT PCS is a signatory to the Australian Alps Liaison Committee Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with both Namadgi and Tidbinbilla included in the Australian Alps National Parks. The PCS, in partnership with other participating agencies, works to achieve the key objectives of the MoU, and participates in cross-border cooperative management programs and meetings.

### Considerations for a new RMP

- Further opportunities to build relationships with community and volunteer groups.
- Formalising an agreement with Birrigai Outdoor School for the ongoing management of Birrigai Rock Shelter.
- Administrative arrangements for community and corporate involvement in the reserve.
- Building relationships with neighbours, through for example, cross-tenure operations.
- Objectives and information published in new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- Protocols for access, Occupational Health & Safety and other issues relevant to partner organisations.

## 6.2 Natural Values

### Primary management objectives

- The biodiversity and geodiversity of Tidbinbilla is conserved.
- Ecosystems are managed so that they can continue to function and evolve naturally, and the integrity of landscapes and scenery is protected.

### Native flora and fauna communities

In 2022-23, systematic monitoring and mapping of significant vegetation communities was completed. As part of this initial project, vegetation mapping was conducted to provide details of the condition and extent of vegetation communities in Tidbinbilla. The information obtained through this project is used as a guide for weed prioritisation, restoration, and successional planning and planting. The mapping also includes permanent plots, which will be used to monitor changes over time.

Throughout the life of the 2012 Plan, major efforts have continued to rehabilitate Jedbinbilla. Because of the success of this work, the decision was made to shift the management approach for Jedbinbilla from SPR to Core Conservation Zone (Zone 1), NP. Jedbinbilla now contains mature native vegetation and is considered rehabilitated. Ongoing management includes pine wilding removal, and invasive plant and pest management.

Tidbinbilla is home to many terrestrial and aquatic species. Many community members record common, rare and unusual fauna sightings via [Canberra NatureMapr](#) and the ONC is notified. Tidbinbilla staff work closely with staff from the ONC and external agencies to undertake research and monitoring of native fauna at Tidbinbilla (see section 5.7).

### Geodiversity

In 2016, a soil landscape dataset was completed, which identifies 55 soil landscape map units across the ACT, including Tidbinbilla (Cook et al. 2016). This digital product provides information to assist in identifying major soil and landscape qualities and constraints to land use.

In 2020, shortly after the Orroral Valley Bushfire, heavy rainfall caused flooding across Tidbinbilla. Due to the fragile nature and instability of the burnt landscape, large amounts of sediment were washed downstream and deposited in the Sanctuary dams. Continued high rainfall over the following two years exacerbated the issue. In 2022, sediment traps were installed in two drainage lines flowing into the Tidbinbilla River, upstream of the Sanctuary, to slow the movement of sediment. Erosion and sedimentation are ongoing issues in the catchment, and regular monitoring and mitigation work is required to manage high sediment loads and protect infrastructure and community values.

### Invasive plant management

An Invasive Plants Operations Plan (IPOP) is developed and implemented annually. The IPOP is supported by ArcGIS Field Maps, which enables geospatial monitoring of invasive plants management, and supports the prioritisation of control work. In addition to the IPOP, in-house mapping and treatment is undertaken when new or emerging biosecurity risks arise. Community groups and volunteers, including the Friends of Tidbinbilla and ParkCare RangerAssist, undertake regular weed control activities at Tidbinbilla. Tidbinbilla's priority species for control include (but are not limited to) African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*), Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* L. agg) and Pine wildings (*Pinus radiata*).

To reduce the spread of invasive species, vehicle wash down facilities are provided at the Tidbinbilla depot and standard procedures are in place for their regular use. Strict procedures are in place for vehicles used in sensitive management zones or undertaking management methods that have a high potential to spread seed. Sites where management activities have occurred (such as trail maintenance or community events) are monitored closely for weed infestations.

#### *Burgan*

Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) is a native species that occurs naturally at Tidbinbilla. However, changes in fire regimes, historical land clearing and grazing have caused its distribution to rapidly extend into areas which were once woodland or forest. Burgan is regularly trimmed back as needed to maintain open views and amenity on the Valley floor. Further research is required to assess the ecological impact of Burgan at Tidbinbilla, and the best management approach.

#### Vertebrate pest management

Guided by the Pest Animal Management Strategy 2012–2022, a Vertebrate Operations Plan (VOP) is developed and implemented annually. The Tidbinbilla Land Management team and EPSDD Rural Services Team collaboratively deliver VOP operations in accordance with statutory requirements.

Since the release of the 2012 Plan, significant advancements have been made in methodology and technology used for vertebrate pest management in the ACT. Thermal aerial control, a relatively recent method that uses heat detection technology to locate animals from helicopters, is now used at Tidbinbilla. It is considered a cost-effective and humane method of controlling vertebrate pests, including deer, pigs and foxes. The ACT aerial control program reduces the risk of further destruction to natural regenerative processes of vegetation communities, particularly those impacted by fire. For the safety of visitors, public areas are closed during operations.

In addition to aerial control, ground trapping, control and monitoring for rabbits, dingoes/wild dogs and pigs is undertaken at Tidbinbilla. Rabbits are monitored using spotlight transects and controlled to mitigate impacts when necessary. Dingo/wild dog control is undertaken on an annual basis, while pig monitoring and control is addressed on an ad-hoc, reactive basis.

#### European wasps

European Wasps (*Vespula germanica*) are a common invertebrate pest species found at Tidbinbilla. The Land Management team implements a pro-active baiting program in spring to manage European Wasps. Management of European Wasps at Tidbinbilla is conducted both in-house and by contractors and is prioritised in high visitation areas. Annual efforts have resulted in a reduction in nest numbers.

#### Considerations for a new RMP

- Opportunities to improve ecological connectivity within Tidbinbilla and beyond the reserves.
- Alignment of land management operations with those undertaken in Namadgi and other Australian Alps National Parks.
- Define target conditions for significant vegetation communities, to facilitate appropriate monitoring and management, especially on the valley floor.
- Updated ecological data, including flora, fauna and vegetation community lists.
- Incorporating objectives and information from new and updated relevant strategies and plans.



- Disaster resilience planning, especially sediment load thresholds and potential mitigation measures.
- The potential impacts of climate change on natural systems, biodiversity and human wellbeing.
- Climate scenarios and climate impacts, and how these affect management of ecological values.
- The ongoing need for research to fill critical knowledge gaps and inform future management.
- A systematic approach to monitoring and protecting bogs at Tidbinbilla.

## 6.3 Cultural Values

### Primary management objective

- Cultural heritage within the Tidbinbilla precinct is identified, conserved, and where appropriate, interpreted and promoted to retain and foster community associations and an appreciation of the past.

### Ngunnawal cultural heritage

Aboriginal occupation of the ACT region dates back over tens of thousands of years, and Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians' cultural values are embedded in places and objects throughout Tidbinbilla. Surveys undertaken in the 1970s to late 1980s identified ceremonial and camp sites, rock shelters with archaeological deposits, artefacts, an art site and stone arrangements. The Land Management team monitors these sites regularly, and operations are often undertaken to ensure their protection and preservation. This includes removal and maintenance of vegetation surrounding cultural sites to reduce the risk of fire damage.

In June 2023, the ACT Government obtained a grant under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund initiative for a project to protect and preserve cultural sites and in-situ artifacts and objects from the impacts of natural disasters at Tidbinbilla. To date, feasibility investigations and design for protection of culturally significant Ngunnawal objects and artifacts at Tidbinbilla have been completed. The project is due to be completed by March 2026.

Since the 2012 Plan came into effect, several groups, initiatives and frameworks have been developed and implemented to support Aboriginal people to access and manage Country on PCS estates. In 2019, the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee (DNCCC) was established to guide cultural understanding and engagement of EPSDD staff with Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians. Supported by the EPSDD Traditional Custodian Engagement Team, the DNCCC provides guidance on environmental land management and heritage matters to facilitate collaborative management of Country. In addition, Tidbinbilla staff work with the DNCCC, Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) and the ACT Heritage Council on heritage works, conservation proposals and development applications that may impact Aboriginal places or objects.

Following the 2020 Orroral Valley Bushfire and flooding event, the PCS has worked with heritage experts, archaeologists, RAOs and the DNCCC to conduct assessments of known cultural heritage sites at Tidbinbilla, as part of the Rapid Risk Assessment response. Results from these assessments

were used to inform how these sites would be best restored in the short-term and to ensure their ongoing protection long-term.

Traditional Custodians and PCS staff undertake cultural burns and associated land management activities aimed at meeting a range of objectives. These include protection of cultural assets, encouraging growth of bush tucker and other culturally important plants, maintenance of desirable vegetation structure, and connection to Country. The PCS remains committed to fulfilling the vision and achieving the objectives of the EPSDD Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – June 2025 (ACT Government 2023).



**Ochre demonstration at Tidbinbilla Open Day, Tidbinbilla.**

### European heritage

Since 2012, the Land Management team, volunteers, and community organisations have undertaken conservation and maintenance works on European heritage places. Nil Desperandum Cottage and Rock Valley Homestead are the primary focus of interpretation of European heritage at Tidbinbilla. In 2015, the ACT Heritage Council decided to include both Nil Desperandum Cottage and Rock Valley Homestead and their surrounds in the ACT Heritage Register.

Since 2019, the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association has been successful in obtaining several grants to undertake projects that conserve, maintain and interpret Tidbinbilla's European heritage, including:

- a plan to guide the development of Rock Valley Homestead as an interpretive hub
- interpretation of the historical *Eucalyptus* oil production industry in the Tidbinbilla area, including construction of a replica distillery at Black Flats (with in-kind support from the PCS)
- creating augmented reality for Tidbinbilla's European history
- preserving and promoting Tidbinbilla oral histories
- conservation works at Rock Valley Homestead.

Under the Heritage Act, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is developed to protect the heritage value of a place or object, and outlines policies and controls for conducting repairs or maintenance. Currently, an up-to-date CMP does not exist for Nil Desperandum. In 2023, the

Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association was successful in obtaining a grant to prepare a draft CMP for Rock Valley Homestead and the surrounds. The draft CMP is expected to be submitted to the Heritage Council in 2025.



**Bird's-eye view of Rock Valley Homestead, Tidbinbilla.**

#### Considerations for a new RMP

- Improved engagement with Ngannawal Traditional Custodians to support their active participation in the care and management of Country, including improving accessibility to undertake cultural practices and cultural resources.
- The development of CMPs for all significant cultural heritage places and/or objects (in partnership with Ngannawal Traditional Custodians).
- Improving Tidbinbilla's cultural heritage management processes.
- Promote the cultural identity of Country within the precinct, including accessibility for Traditional Custodian led cultural tourism opportunities.
- Support Traditional Custodians aspiration and needs in caring for Country, including employment, training and visibility.
- Facilitating collaborative management of Country with the DNCCC, including on land management, cultural practices, and heritage matters.
- Supporting the current aspirations and visions of community organisations for the protection and management of European heritage.



## 6.4 Recreation and Tourism

### Primary management objectives

- Tidbinbilla provides a variety of recreation opportunities that are consistent with the protection of the area's natural and cultural heritage values.
- Tidbinbilla makes a significant contribution to the spectrum of nature-based tourism opportunities in the ACT and region and informs visitors about those opportunities.

### Visitor Information Centre

In May 2023, following a comprehensive building review, the permanent Visitor Information Centre (VIC) was closed to address issues caused by structural issues, persistent water leaks, residual moisture, and other associated faults. In April 2024, a new demountable building was temporarily installed at the entrance of Tidbinbilla. The demolition of the original VIC is planned for mid-2025 and will commence once approvals are obtained.

### NatureStays

The PCS NatureStays properties comprise two historic European buildings located within the PCS estate, one of which is Nil Desperandum cottage at Tidbinbilla. Nil Desperandum is available for public hire via online bookings and provides guests with a tranquil, natural bush setting beneath the Tidbinbilla Range. The cottage is managed by the PCS Volunteer and Visitor Experience team and Tidbinbilla Land Management team and remains a very popular accommodation option, with over 200 guests staying in 2023.

### Visitor Experience Survey

Since 2019, the PCS Visitor Experience Survey has been undertaken biannually, in spring and autumn. The survey aims to collect information about who uses ACT reserves, how these places are used, visitor satisfaction and motivation, and community connection and sense of place. The survey is conducted online and promoted via social media and temporary corflute posters with QR codes in targeted reserves. The results from the 2024 autumn survey demonstrate Tidbinbilla's popularity as the third most visited reserve in the ACT. In addition, results show:

- Almost two thirds of visitors to Tidbinbilla visited the Sanctuary, with 62% extremely satisfied with their visit.
- Most respondents were motivated to visit Tidbinbilla to spend time in nature, for physical activity and to spend time with their family and friends.
- Respondents are most satisfied with Tidbinbilla's ease of access, recreational trails, customer service from staff, maintenance and/or cleanliness and parking access.
- Over 85% of visitors were satisfied with their visit to Tidbinbilla.

The results also show that visitors would like to see additional ranger-guided activities and talks, school holiday programs, and continued improvements to signage.

### Tidbinbilla Accessibility and Inclusion Report

In 2024, the PCS commissioned consultants to undertake site assessments and review Tidbinbilla's visitor information to provide recommendations on improving:

- physical accessibility at sites
- accessibility of interpretive information at sites
- accessibility information on the Tidbinbilla website and the overall provision of accessibility information
- digital accessibility of visitor information.

From this, 67 recommendations were made across 10 sites at Tidbinbilla. The PCS Volunteer and Visitor Experience team is in the process of reviewing these recommendations for action.

### Visitor Experience Strategy

A draft Visitor Experience Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed to guide PCS visitor management planning through to 2030. The Strategy aims to enrich community wellbeing through connection to nature and culture, support shared stewardship of PCS reserves, and develop strategic partnerships with Ngunnawal, industry and community. To achieve this, actions are identified across several focus areas: recreation and community wellbeing, cultural experiences, sustainable tourism, shared stewardship, accessibility and inclusion, educating the next generation, and planning for the future. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be implemented in 2025, following further consultation.

### Recreation and Commercial Tourism/Use

In 2020, the PCS assessed the feasibility of developing a nature-based commercial tourism framework. Since 2023, work has accelerated, and the scope has expanded to consider the future management of commercial tourism, other commercial use and organised recreational activities.

The purpose of this work is to:

- Bridge a gap in regulation for the use of PCS estate for commercially run tourism and other commercial activities and incentivise operators to comply with ACT Government requirements.
- Provide clarity to local operators on the requirements and simplify the process to operate on PCS reserves.
- Build strategic partnerships between the PCS and the tourism industry to facilitate best practice sustainable tourism opportunities that showcase the natural and cultural values of ACT parks and reserves and lead to enhanced visitor experiences.
- Provide consistency in how the PCS works with recreational user groups, through best practice governance arrangements.
- Support the conservation of our parks, including safeguarding sensitive areas and managing risks of overuse, through educating operators and user groups in caring for the environment.
- Provide clear processes for staff to make decisions on appropriate new proposals and reduce administrative burden on districts.
- Support the creation of jobs in natural and cultural tourism with flow-on benefits to the ACT economy.

It is anticipated that, following further consultation, new policies and/or guidelines for recreation and commercial use will be developed and implemented in 2025.

### Considerations for a new RMP

- The implementation of the forthcoming Tidbinbilla Master Plan (see 6.7), including the upgrade and replacement of infrastructure to support tourism and recreation and the purpose of the VIC as a concierge to Tidbinbilla.
- New policies and strategies relevant to recreation and tourism at Tidbinbilla.
- The suitability of the current list of permitted and prohibited activities within the park.
- The impact to natural and cultural values from increased visitation.



Visitors enjoying mountain biking, Tidbinbilla.

## 6.5 Education and Interpretation

### Primary management objective

- Tidbinbilla provides high quality, well recognised opportunities for visitors to acquire knowledge of, and to understand and enjoy, the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Tidbinbilla offers opportunities to connect with Ngunnawal culture and to learn about and experience the region's ecology, flora and fauna. School and other learner groups are a significant portion of the visitors each year, bringing high demand to engage with educational activities.

### Tidbinbilla Open Day

Over the past 15 years, the PCS has hosted the annual Tidbinbilla Open Day to encourage visitation to natural areas, educate the community on park use and current programs, promote conservation activities and recreational opportunities, and celebrate First Nations culture. The last event, in September 2024, was highly successful. Over 4200 visitors attended, and the PCS was represented by staff from Tidbinbilla (including the Threatened Species Program), Namadgi, Googong, and the Volunteer and Visitor Experience team.

Volunteering in PCS reserves was promoted, and ParkCare Volunteers provided general information and coordinated children's activities. Community partners included the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association, ACT National Parks Association, ACT Wildlife, Lions Club of Belconnen, Outward Bound,

Friends of Tidbinbilla, NatureMapr, Brindabella Bushwalking Club and Canberra Bushwalking Club. Emergency Services agencies, including ACT Fire and Rescue, State Emergency Service, ACT Rural Fire Service (RFS) and ACT Ambulance, joined forces with the PCS Fire Management Unit to engage with the public and provide education on bushfire prevention and response.

Ongoing delivery of the Tidbinbilla Open Day will encourage public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the natural and cultural values of the reserves and ensure that members of the public have a good understanding of nature conservation issues.

#### Signage Manual and updates

Since the 2012 Plan became effective, new signage has been installed and existing signage updated, to provide both education and interpretation about Tidbinbilla to visitors. A PCS Signage Manual is currently in development, which will provide clear direction and processes for future planning, design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of signs across PCS reserves. This will ensure consistency across all sign types and will embed best practice signage concepts, supported by behavioural science and accessibility and inclusion principles.

#### Considerations for a new RMP

- Incorporating objectives and information from new and updated relevant strategies and plans.
- New opportunities for interpretation and education.
- Opportunities to develop programs that enhance community understanding and shared stewardship of Tidbinbilla's values.
- The ongoing and increasing demand for curriculum-linked experiences at Tidbinbilla to engage students and enhance interpretation.

## 6.6 Research and Monitoring

#### Primary management objectives

- Through research partnerships, Tidbinbilla facilitates and participates in:
  - environmental research related, in particular, to threatened species conservation, captive breeding programs, and ecosystem management following disturbance
  - research related to the Aboriginal and European cultural heritage of the area
  - other research that assists in building knowledge and understanding for professional reserve management.

#### Citizen science programs

Waterwatch, a citizen science initiative, works to monitor, understand and manage local waterways. The 'Tidbinbilla River TID1' reach includes sites monitored along approximately 8.5 km of Tidbinbilla River, from Ashbrook Creek to Gilmores Road, and includes sites within the Sanctuary. Tidbinbilla River TID1 is monitored monthly by two Waterwatch teams, including the Friends of Tidbinbilla and the ParkCare Visitor Assist Program. Each year, the ACT's Waterwatch branch, Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch, produces a Catchment Health Indicator Program report. Results from the 2022 and 2023 reports indicate Tidbinbilla's catchment health is in excellent condition (Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch 2022, 2023).



Over the past 11 years, Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch and ParkCare WildlifeAssist volunteers run volunteer-assisted Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) surveys as part of Platypus Month (August). The Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla is a regular monitoring site and in 2024, two Rakali and seven Platypus were recorded (Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch 2024). All results are published in the annual [Platypus Month Report](#).

The ACT and Region FrogWatch Program (FrogWatch) is run by the Ginninderra Catchment Group. Since 2002, frog populations have been monitored by associated volunteers as part of the annual spring FrogCensus. Three survey sites within Tidbinbilla are monitored by Friends of Tidbinbilla. In 2023, seven frog species were observed across these sites (Hoefer et al. 2023). All results are published in the annual [FrogCensus Report](#).

### Species surveys

#### *Southern Greater Glider surveys*

Following the 2003 Canberra Bushfires, spotlighting surveys for Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*) commenced annually and were undertaken by Tidbinbilla staff until 2007. After the 2020 Orroral Valley Bushfire, the species was assessed as High risk under the [Rapid Risk Assessment Team's \(RRAT\) Report](#), and recommencement of surveys was recommended. The ONC developed a systematic survey design and selected survey sites based on predictions from a habitat suitability model. No Southern Greater Gliders were detected at Tidbinbilla during these surveys. Survey efforts were reviewed in 2024 to incorporate other habitat considerations and recommenced in September 2024 by the ONC and Tidbinbilla staff. Notably, in one night of surveys, seven individuals were detected. ONC staff are now working to develop a long-term monitoring program for the species.

#### *Murunung naruwi (Cold Spiney Crayfish)*

The ONC's aquatic team now undertakes regular monitoring of Murunung naruwi (Cold Spiney Crayfish) (*Euastacus crassus*) within the Tidbinbilla River. Survey efforts have increased in frequency since 2020 due to concerns for the species after large sediment loads washed into Tidbinbilla's rivers and creek lines following the Orroral Valley Bushfire and flooding event. A drop in population numbers has been observed in drought and fire-affected areas.

### Threatened Species Program

Since the 2012 Plan was developed, the Threatened Species Program has grown significantly, and the team now actively manages captive breeding populations of the Critically Endangered Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*), Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis lineata*), Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (Baray) (*Petrogale penicillata*), and Koala (Gula) (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). Free-ranging populations of Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*), Long-nosed Potoroo (*Potorous tridactylus*), and Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) also occur within fenced areas at Tidbinbilla.

In 2003, the Northern Corroboree Frog program was established in collaboration with the ONC, Australian National University (ANU) and Zoos Victoria to:

- maintain a breeding, genetically diverse 'insurance colony'
- provide Northern Corroboree Frogs (including eggs) for release back into the wild
- use the captive population to improve knowledge and methods of captive husbandry of frogs

- provide animals for behavioural and ecological research that will inform management of wild populations and reintroduction strategies.

Since 2012, thousands of captive-bred Northern Corroboree Frogs and their eggs have been released into areas of Namadgi. The number of frogs bred for release has increased since the establishment of a specialised egg and tadpole facility and improved husbandry standards. The captive breeding program at Tidbinbilla holds the largest insurance and breeding population of the species.

In 2021, the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon program was established at Tidbinbilla in collaboration with the Threatened Species Program, PCS Offsets, the ONC, Melbourne Zoo and the University of Canberra. Elements of the program include:

- establishing a captive colony and associated breeding program at Tidbinbilla that improves genetic diversity and provides a source population for recovery actions, including research
- researching the ecology of the species to provide a strong evidence base for management decision-making, including future population supplementation and reintroductions.

In 2020, an existing facility at Tidbinbilla was converted to house the breeding dragons. The current program is expected to run over a 10-year period.

Established in 1996, the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby program is the longest running threatened species breeding program at Tidbinbilla. Until 2015, the goal of this program was to produce a stable captive population for later release into the wild. However, the success of the program was compromised by a very narrow genetic profile within the breeding population. Due to this, the program's focus shifted and in 2017, Tidbinbilla partnered with the southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Recovery Team, Zoos Victoria and the Australian Government's Threatened Species Commissioner's Office to establish a genetic rescue breeding program to produce a genetically diverse insurance population for release into a safe haven. The Tidbinbilla Safe Haven, large (120 ha) feral predator-proof fenced area, was completed in 2024. The breeding program successfully produced genetically diverse animals, and eight rock-wallabies have since been released into the Safe Haven. Further releases are planned for 2025.



**Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*), Tidbinbilla.**

Since 2012, Tidbinbilla's Threatened Species Program team has partnered with the ONC and PCS Offsets, and external partners from universities and zoological institutions, to facilitate and support research. This includes Honours and PhD projects on Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*), Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby and Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon at Tidbinbilla. The Threatened Species Program team continues to work in partnership with academic institutions, government and zoos to research threatened species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and NC Act.

#### Considerations for a new RMP

- Enhancing community education about the Threatened Species Program.
- Meaningful engagement with Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians in Recovery Programs.
- The shift in focus of the Threatened Species Program from species for display to focused actions that contribute to the recovery of threatened species, including establishing captive breeding programs and insurance populations.
- Support for the Threatened Species Program and its ongoing development, implementation and operational needs.
- Management of threatened species that are not part of captive breeding colonies, such as the Long-nosed Potoroo, Southern Brown Bandicoot, and Platypus.
- Licencing requirements and other compliance needs for the Threatened Species Program.
- Incorporating objectives and information from new and updated relevant strategies and plans, and how this applies to the Threatened Species Program.
- New and updated monitoring and research information to inform the management and protection of natural, cultural and social values at Tidbinbilla.

## 6.7 Environmental Planning, Protection and Management

#### Fire management, monitoring and research

The primary legislation for bushfire management in the ACT is the *Emergencies Act 2004*. The PCS works in partnership with the ACT Emergency Services Agency and ACT RFS to manage bushfire risks and bushfire prevention activities to protect life, property and the environment. As stipulated in a 'Fire Management Operations in the ACT MoU', the PCS as land manager has responsibility under the Emergencies Act for preparedness, to prevent and inhibit the outbreak and spread of fire on its land (including the use and control of prescribed burning), and to protect property from fire spreading from the land. In addition, the PCS engages regularly with the ACT RFS and NSW RFS to plan and coordinate strategies and fire management activities. Fire management in Tidbinbilla is undertaken in accordance with the ten-year Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP), five-year ACT Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP), and an annual Bushfire Operational Plan (BOP).

Tidbinbilla staff are provided with opportunities to provide input into the BOP prior to its approval and implementation. Ecological thresholds (Tolerable Fire Intervals), growth stage diversity and climate refugia for ACT vegetation communities are identified and considered in the preparation of the RFMP and BOP (available in the [Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations](#) 2019). The ONC provides ecological advice to inform prescribed burns, oversees burns and undertakes post-burn monitoring to report on the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of burning. These reports provide information and recommendations to support continued improvement in planning and implementing prescribed burns. A values officer position was created

in 2024 to support pre-burn planning, implementation of planned burns and oversee the protection of environmental and cultural values within PCS reserves during bushfire events.

The PCS and ONC, in collaboration with external partners such as ANU, University of Melbourne, University of Canberra, and University of Wollongong, undertake research to inform ongoing fire management activities and to better understand the response of biodiversity to fire. The PCS is also a member of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, which supports research to improve disaster resilience and reduce the impacts from bushfires and other natural hazards. Fire management in Tidbinbilla is also informed by:

- ACT vegetation mapping and spatial records of protected/fire sensitive species and communities
- fire history and severity mapping
- erosion hazard assessment and mapping
- fire management zones.

### *Skyline Trail*

In 2024, the ACT Government was successful in obtaining a grant under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund Initiative to establish 14 km of dual-purpose trail across Tidbinbilla's ridgeline, connecting Fishing Gap to Johns Peak. The ridgeline is the single most effective location for managing high-risk fire threats to Tidbinbilla's ecological and cultural values. This project will formalise an existing informal footpad created over many years by bushwalkers. Pending approvals, the formalisation of this track will:

- provide access for fire prevention, such as implementing hazard reduction burns, to protect Tidbinbilla and areas further east to Canberra, from bushfire events
- provide access for emergency services and their response to incidents
- provide a new walking track experience for visitors
- eliminate the unregulated use of these trails, protecting the ecological and cultural values along the proposed route.

### *Orroral Valley Bushfire (2020)*

In 2020, the natural, cultural and recreational values of Tidbinbilla were impacted by the Orroral Valley Bushfire. Approximately 1,444 ha (22%) of the reserve was burnt and the severe storms and flooding that followed caused further damage to infrastructure, severe erosion in some areas, and extensive sediment deposition in Tidbinbilla's rivers and streams. EPSDD worked with the community to develop and implement an ACT Bushfire and Flood Recovery Plan (released in September 2020) to assist in the natural recovery of impacted areas. This followed recommendations from the RRAT, which undertook an immediate assessment of the burned area and produced a report that outlined the key risks arising from the bushfire and recommendations to mitigate those risks. Immediate actions are now complete and long-term recovery projects and actions are expected to conclude by mid-2025.

### *Environmental impact assessment*

Under the Planning Act, an environmental impact assessment is required for certain proposals, to understand the potential environmental impacts of a development and recommend any conditions



for the proposal's approval (should it be given). There are two environmental impact assessment options available for ACT-protected matters – an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Significance Opinion (ESO). Tidbinbilla PCS staff follow procedures to ensure environmental impacts are considered in all operations and management. This includes:

- developing project and work plans, which consider the potential for possible environmental impacts, and obtaining relevant licenses for management operations
- using GIS for spatial analysis of possible impacts
- completing project briefs, risk assessments and site inductions for contractors
- considering environmental impacts when assessing event applications.

#### Management operations and environmental protection

PCS staff are required to undertake mandatory training and to develop skill sets to ensure safe and best practice management is delivered in their operations. Training requirements are based on the position held and need to be successfully completed before certain operational activities can be undertaken, such as four-wheel drive training and chemical certifications for those undertaking weed control.

Tidbinbilla staff follow standard PCS procedures in advising the public when chemicals or hazardous materials are being used in the area and maintain Material Data Safety Sheets for all stored chemicals. In addition, staff follow Work Health and Safety (WHS) protocols when undertaking operations. Temporary signage and appropriate barriers are installed, and a radio call-in is done prior to and after completing works. In addition, all contractors must be suitably qualified to undertake the contracted works and inducted on-site to fulfil the ACT Government's WHS requirements.

As required, the PCS consults with authorities including the ACT Property Group and ACT Roads, regarding the safety and maintenance of infrastructure. The PCS monitors compliance with licenses (including NC Act licenses) and agreements, and events approvals. External agencies are required to produce a communication plan for works that may affect visitors and must provide details on the mechanisms for informing the public.

#### Access management and law enforcement

General information regarding access to Tidbinbilla is provided at the temporary VIC and by signage along roadsides and track heads, with additional information provided online. Vehicle access is monitored, and locked gates prevent access to areas closed to visitors. All personnel going beyond locked gates are required to advise Tidbinbilla staff.

Remote areas of Tidbinbilla are used for training by various emergency services including police, ambulance, and fire. Tidbinbilla staff partner with emergency services to protect the community in instances of search and rescue, or other emergencies. As conservation officers under the NC Act, Tidbinbilla staff can issue infringements to visitors who undertake prohibited activities. For more serious incidents, Tidbinbilla staff work closely with the ACT Rural Patrol (ACT Policing).

### Implementation of the Management Plan

The PCS has implemented an Operations Planning System that facilitates consistent operational planning, activity implementation and reporting across PCS-managed reserves. The system allows PCS staff to record and prioritise operational activities and enables tracking of actions.

### Tidbinbilla Master Plan

In the 2024-25 financial year, funding was made available to develop a Master Plan for Tidbinbilla. Once completed, the Master Plan will provide a long-term vision and plan to upgrade and improve Tidbinbilla's infrastructure and visitor facilities. The Master Plan will complement and align to a new RMP, the Nature Based Tourism Strategy and other strategies, to investigate the resilient, sustainable, and culturally appropriate infrastructure required to enhance visitor experiences and support safe public use of the reserve.

### Considerations for a new RMP

- Disaster resilience planning and preparedness for natural disasters, including bushfires.
- The implementation of the forthcoming Tidbinbilla Master Plan (see 6.7).

## 7. Conclusion

Section 6 outlines the achievements in meeting the objectives of the 2012 Plan. Notable achievements include the considerable progress that has been made in vertebrate pest and invasive plant management, the overwhelming contribution made by volunteers to Tidbinbilla's operations, and the ongoing success of the Threatened Species Program in leading conservation research for threatened species. While most objectives of the 2012 Plan have been met and are now considered part of business-as-usual, improvements can be made in some areas. For example, although initiatives and frameworks have been implemented to support engagement with Nggunawal Traditional Custodians and protective measures undertaken for the conservation of cultural heritage, increased collaboration with the Nggunawal community is required to manage Country at Tidbinbilla and establish protocols for protecting significant cultural sites.

As Canberra's population grows and visitation to Tidbinbilla increases, there is an ongoing need to maintain, replace and upgrade built assets. The forthcoming Master Plan for Tidbinbilla should set out the long-term vision and plan for infrastructure and facilities to support operations, tourism and recreation. Purpose-built infrastructure, along with the Visitor Experience Strategy and Recreation and Commercial Tourism/Use guidelines, will identify additional opportunities for recreation and tourism, and provide improved education and interpretation of Tidbinbilla's important nature, cultural and social values.

Key challenges in undertaking this review were staff turnover and the continued absence of a systematic, integrated approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of management effectiveness of PCS reserves. A new Values-based Management approach to reserve management planning will support a more consistent, efficient, and effective planning approach, and will establish a framework for monitoring and evaluation of reserve values and management outcomes. This will assist the PCS in implementing enhanced adaptive management to conserve the natural, cultural and social values of Tidbinbilla into the future, and meeting reporting obligations under the NC Act.

Overall, the 2012 Plan has achieved its purpose as a decision-making framework for the reserve. The Plan provides information on the values of Tidbinbilla, objectives for the reserve and actions to achieve these objectives. It provides appropriate guidance on policy requirements and direction to Government staff, stakeholders and community for Tidbinbilla's management and use. However, during the life of the 2012 Plan, significant events and changes have affected Tidbinbilla's management and operations. These have included:

- adjustments to the government Administrative Arrangements and separation from the Birrigai Outdoor School
- the 2020 Orroral Valley Bushfire and subsequent flooding events
- closure of the permanent VIC and opening of the temporary VIC.

In addition, advancements have been made in the application and use of GIS and LiDAR data, new research and data have become available to inform management and operations, and work has advanced to consider the impacts of climate change for management planning in the ACT. While the 2012 Plan contains information still relevant to Tidbinbilla's ongoing management, substantial advancements and updates to policies and legislation have been made, along with the development

and implementation of new plans, strategies and guidelines. These changes will be crucial in informing the future of Tidbinbilla's management.

It is therefore recommended that a new reserve management plan for Tidbinbilla is developed as soon as practicable.



## 8. Appendix

The 'Adequacy of Primary Planning Document' tool was developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to assess the adequacy of planning documents to guide management of protected areas (Hockings et al. 2008). An assessment of the current Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012 against the IUCN criteria is outlined below in Table 1.

*Table 1: Assessment of the current 2012 Plan against IUCN criteria for protected area planning documents.*

DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK	RATING
1. Does the plan establish a clear understanding of the desired outcomes of management in clear terms rather than just specifying actions to be taken?	<b>Good:</b> Desired outcomes are reasonably articulated
2. Does the plan express the desired future for the reserve in a way that can assist management of new issues and opportunities that arise during the life of the plan?	<b>Good:</b> Desired future is expressed in a way that gives some guidance for addressing new issues and opportunities
3. Does the plan provide for a process of monitoring, review and adjustment during the life of the plan?	<b>Fair:</b> Need for monitoring, review and adjustment is recognised but not dealt with in sufficient detail
4. Does the plan provide an adequate and appropriate policy environment for management of the reserve?	<b>Very Good:</b> Policy requirements for the site are identified and adequate and appropriate policies are established with clear linkages to the desired future for the site
5. Is the plan integrated/linked to other significant national/regional/ sectoral plans that influence management of the reserve?	<b>Very Good:</b> Relevant national, regional, and sectoral plans that affect the site are identified and specific mechanisms are included to provide for integration or linkage now and in the future.
6. Is the plan based on an adequate and relevant information base?	<b>Good:</b> The information base is adequate in scope and depth but maybe a little outdated and/or contains irrelevant information.
7. Have the values for the reserve been identified in the plan and linked to the management objectives and desired outcomes?	<b>Good:</b> The site values have been reasonably identified and linked to management objectives and desired outcomes for the site.
8. Does the plan address the primary issues facing management of the reserve within the context of the desired future of the reserve?	<b>Very Good:</b> Plan identifies primary issues for the site and deals with them within the context of the desired future for the site (i.e. plan is outcome, rather than issue-driven).
9. Are the objectives and actions specified in the plan represented as adequate and appropriate responses to the issues?	<b>Good:</b> Objectives and actions are adequate and appropriate for most issues.
10. Were local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve involved in developing the management plan and setting direction for management?	<b>Fair:</b> Traditional Custodians were involved only minimally in developing the management plan and setting direction for the reserve.
11. Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of local and indigenous communities living in or around the reserve?	<b>Fair:</b> There is limited attention given to the needs and interests of local and indigenous communities and little account taken of these in decision-making.
12. Does the plan take account of the needs and interests of other stakeholders involved in the reserve?	<b>Good:</b> Plan identifies the needs and interests of other stakeholders, but it is not apparent that these have been taken into account in decision-making.
13. Does the plan provide adequate direction on management actions that should be undertaken in the reserve?	<b>Good:</b> Management actions specified in the plan can generally be clearly understood and provide an adequate basis for developing operational plans such as work programs and budgets.
14. Does the plan identify the priorities amongst strategies and actions in a way that facilitates work programming and allocation of resources?	<b>Fair:</b> Priorities are not clearly indicated but may be inferred for work programming and resource allocation.

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