

**ACT LOWLAND NATIVE GRASSLANDS  
INQUIRY BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The ACT Government has prepared a number of significant strategies for the conservation of grasslands and woodland. The Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy and the Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy along with the Aquatic Species and Riparian Zone Conservation Strategy, provide a strong framework for planning and management of the key threatened ecological communities in the ACT and species that are dependent upon them.

In recent months the ACT Government has become extremely concerned about the deterioration of some of our significant lowland native grasslands, particularly at Majura, Belconnen, Jerrabomberra and Gungahlin.

An inquiry into the situation is required under the following Terms of Reference:

- (6) Review existing management arrangements, and if necessary, identify comprehensive conservation management principles and immediate actions to ensure the protection and long-term sustainability of native lowland grasslands and their vulnerable ecosystems.
- (7) Identify the causes of the deterioration of lowland native grasslands. In doing this, the impact of eastern grey kangaroos, both in the long and short term, is to be explicitly addressed.
- (8) Identify any impediments to implementing short and long-term management practice for conservation of lowland grasslands within the ACT. In doing this, identify any deficiencies (including development controls, data collection, monitoring and reporting programs) which need to be remedied to further protect native lowland grasslands, their vulnerable ecosystems and associated fauna adequately.
- (9) Identify ways for ensuring effective communication with stakeholders, whose actions potentially, indirectly or directly affect threatened grasslands.
- (10) Determine whether any policy/legislative changes are needed for the protection of threatened lowland native grasslands.

The Commissioner is to consult with all relevant experts and key stakeholders, including the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, to canvas measures needed to ensure the long term sustainability of native lowland grasslands.

*Commissioner's comment.* Following release of the above terms of reference some stakeholders sought clarity regarding scope of the inquiry/investigation, in particular the inclusion of the Grassland Earless Dragon, the Striped Legless Lizard and the Golden Sun Moth. I have been advised by the Minister, letter dated 29 November, that the *investigation of Lowland Native Grasslands includes their associated threatened communities and species, as well as threats to, and identification of measures for protecting these, and other species are an inherent part of the Terms of Reference.* Accordingly the specific species mentioned above are included.