

National park needs support

By Naomi Fallon

THE push for a cross-border national park is gaining momentum, with calls for the government to get behind the project.

The Ginninderra Falls Association wants privately owned-land that incorporates part of the Murrumbidgee River in Yass, the once-popular Ginninderra Falls and a section of the ACT Woodstock Nature Reserve to be created into the Murrumbidgee-Ginninderra Gorges National Park.

Association president Chris Watson says the notion has gained support from the Conservation Council ACT Region, the Belconnen Community Council, the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the National Parks Association of ACT and NSW, and the National Trust ACT.

During its inaugural meeting the Ginninderra Falls Association identified two main hurdles – gaining ACT and NSW government support and acquiring sufficient funds.

Mr Watson said last year's Memorandum of Understanding signed by Chief Minister Katy Gallagher and NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell should be used to discuss the park's prospects.

"Part of this area is in NSW ... so we've got to get the Premier on side," he said.

"Land use issues were one of the priority issues in the memorandum."

"We want to meet with [the Chief Minister]; we want to have a conversation with her to work out what

progress there is to date."

Once the ACT and NSW governments agreed to establish the park, Mr Watson said funding issues could be addressed.

"It's all privately-owned land, but one of the owners is anxious to sell," he said.

"We'd also be looking for donors; there could be the odd philanthropist – our very own Dick Smith – out there.

"We've got to get that ball rolling ... and work out where we're going to get the sources of funds."

Mr Watson said the park – particularly Ginninderra Falls – should be accessible to the public.

"It's a really picturesque gorge," he said. "It's important to get it back because it's so important visually, the falls are beautiful.

"People are being denied the access and the views and the excitement."

A spokesman for Ms Gallagher said, while land use issues were identified as a priority, the national park had not been mentioned in the memorandum of understanding between the Chief Minister and Mr O'Farrell.

"Ginninderra Falls is not something that ACT has direct responsibility for – it is a NSW Government responsibility – but we would be happy to cooperate with the NSW Government," she said.

She said the Chief Minister would be happy to meet with the Ginninderra Falls Association to discuss the issue further.



Ginninderra Falls Association president Chris Watson, with Damon Cusack, John Hyles and Lyn Jenkins, who are calling for the Murrumbidgee-Ginninderra Gorges National Park to be established. Picture: Elesa Lee