

19 March, 2012

Dear Ginninderra Member of the Legislative Assembly

Proposed Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park cross border issues

In recent months there have been informal discussions with ACT MLAs regarding the proposal to create the Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park on the northern borders of ACT within the Yass Valley Shire.

We contend that, even though the national park will be within NSW, overwhelmingly the beneficiaries of the national park will be the residents of ACT, especially those in the Belconnen and Gungahlin townships. Thus we wish to progress discussions with MLAs representing the Ginninderra electorate and raise cross-border issues that occur within the ACT Assembly deliberations. We hope you viewed the WIN News item on 27 February showing some of the Ginninderra Falls country involved.

Association committee members would like to meet with you to discuss steps that may be taken within ACT to progress the creation of a national park. The following agenda items are proposed:

1. Status of discussions with NSW Government and agencies.
2. Status of discussions with Yass Valley Council
3. Discussions with landowners
4. ACT Government 2012 ecotourism initiative
5. ACT Government cross-border initiatives and support
6. Forward planning suggestions and initiatives

I'd like to propose that Association committee members meet with you in the next few weeks at a place and date convenient to you. Suggest a date, time and place. Please address an email reply email to Dr. Finlayson.

I attach a newsletter recently distributed to Association members and Yass Valley Council.

Yours sincerely



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c/- all Ginninderra MLAs.

Murrumbidgee-Ginninderra Gorges National Park

Project Status – February 2013

By
**Ginninderra Falls Association
committee members**

Lower Ginninderra Falls
(Photo - John Baker)



In 2011 a North Canberra community group developed a proposal to create a national park just north of the ACT border around the confluence of Ginninderra Creek and the Murrumbidgee River. This document outlines the status of that proposal and outline progress towards the twin goals -

- *To restore public access to the Ginninderra Creek & Murrumbidgee River corridors.*
- *To create a sustainable public park for recreational, educational and ecological purposes.*

Formation of the Ginninderra Falls Association

In 2011 there were a series of informal meetings by a community group seeking to develop a national park around the confluence of Ginninderra Creek and the Murrumbidgee River. Subsequently a more formal community association was established. The inaugural meeting of the Ginninderra Falls Association was held on 14 February 2012 at which the draft constitution was approved and a committee elected. The Association holds regular committee meetings at the Southern Cross Club, Jamison.

Association web site – www.ginninderra.org.au

Community consultation

During 2012 the Association took the opportunity to make the case for the establishment of a national park at various public and association meetings. Public presentations were held at Belconnen Library in February and September, public displays and presentations were held at CSIRO Discovery Centre during March, and a presentation was made at the annual Canberra Region Heritage Symposium held at Australian National University during July.

Also during 2012 the Association joined the ACT Region Conservation Council and benefits from networking within numerous other community groups. The NSW National Parks Association based in Sydney has lent support to the park proposal. Landowners on the south side of Ginninderra Creek have facilitated inspections of Ginninderra Falls by NSW NPA and others.

Landowner consultation

On 29 November 2012 the Ginninderra Falls Association held a landowners lunchtime forum at the Southern Cross Club, Jamison Centre. Landowners from eight significant properties were represented. Presentations were made by the Association and by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Office, Queanbeyan. There followed open discussion, principally about the nature of process by which NSW Government may acquire land. It was emphasised that there would be no compulsory land acquisitions. Landowners would have to be

willing sellers, and go through a process of land valuation by NSW Government officers. One landowner has initiated the land evaluation process with NSW Government officers for part of their property.

NSW Government consultation

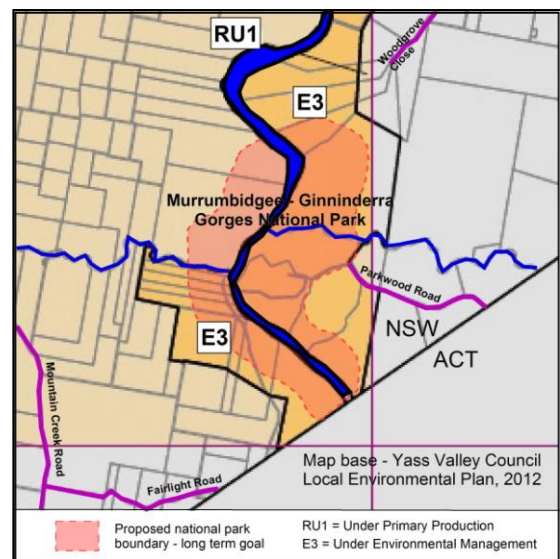
In September 2012 the Association wrote to the NSW Minister for the Environment, Hon Robyn Parker MP, regarding the proposal to establish the Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park and a response from the Office of Environment and Heritage was received outlining the constraints on NSW Government regarding land acquisitions. Very useful talks were held at the NSW Government offices, Queanbeyan, with officers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. That office is now evaluating one landholder offer of part of their land for inclusion in the park. The NSW Member for Burrinjuck, Katrina Hodgkinson MP, has been kept informed of national park proposals.

ACT Government consultation

At the Association's request, in 2012 the ACT Chief Minister contacted the NSW Government and Minister Parker replied outlining the NSW Government constraints on developing such a national park. The Association has corresponded with the ACT Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, to put its case for a national park and how it would be of considerable benefit to the ACT residents and visitors. The Association has also exchanged letters with the Chief Minister to have the ACT Government involve itself in the formation of a working party of representatives from governments look at all the ramifications of the park proposal. The Association made a submission to the ACT Government Canberra Region Ecotourism enquiry. The Association is currently seeking discussions with ACT MLAs for the Ginninderra electorate

Yass Valley Council consultation

In 2012 the Association made a submission to the Yass Valley Council Draft Environmental Plan 2012 regarding the land use of areas within the proposed boundaries of the Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park. It should be noted that, under that Environmental Plan, the park largely falls within land areas designated as “E3 – environmental management” (see attached map). Because of the rugged terrain the lands involved are largely unsuitable for “primary production (RU1)”. The Association has also noted the encouraging Council's 30 April 2012 submission to the ACT Government enquiry into Canberra Region Ecotourism.



Australian Government links

The Association has informal links with the Australian Government “Caring for Our Country Program” through the Ginninderra Catchment Group. This group has been funded for several years and employs professionals to restore and improve environmental systems within the Murray-Darling water catchment area. The Federal Member for Fraser, Andrew Leigh MP, has indicated in-principle support for the national park concept.

Cross-Border Working Group – the way ahead

In 2013 the Association aims to get together a cross-border working group of government, landowner and community representatives to develop ways and means of achieving the Association goals.

Towards this end the Association is currently seeking the appointment of appropriate spokespersons from all levels of government, landholders and community groups who can work together to develop the way ahead for the project to establish the Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park.