



Albury
Conservation
Company



STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2021

24th November 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Albury Conservation Company Ltd (ACC) Strategic Plan (2016-21) aims to provide strategic direction to the organisation. The plan and its actions and measures will be reviewed on a regular basis. The actions within each theme are listed in priority order. ACC first developed a Strategic Plan in May 2011. This resulted from a community workshop presenting the findings of a Squirrel Glider research project, and a follow-up strategic planning session of Board members. The Strategic Plan referenced a number of key documents including the ACC constitution, the 2004 Thurgoona Threatened Species Conservation Strategy (TTSCS), and the 'Population Viability Analysis for Squirrel Gliders in the Thurgoona and Albury Ranges region of NSW' (van der Ree et al, 2009). The subsequent five-year Strategic Plan (2011 – 2016) reflected the identity of the ACC and the plan to achieve the objectives of the Trust Deed and Constitution. This identity includes:

- The Thurgoona area is considered a special place for wildlife and biodiversity retention and enhancement. This is ACC's primary focus area;
- Community engagement for education, awareness and involvement is critical and a major focus;
- Squirrel Gliders are ACC's primary wildlife species for investment but other threatened species (e.g. Sloane's Froglet) are also candidates;
- The Trust Fund principal be retained in part and not fully expended. This enables ACC to be flexible and able to quickly respond to needs;
- That ACC be developed as an attractive biodiversity investment organisation.

BACKGROUND

- Albury Conservation Company Ltd (ACC) was established in 2006 through the Corporations Act 2001 as a Company Limited by Guarantee;
- Under the ACC's Constitution the organisation's objectives are to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Thurgoona area, as well as to inform and educate the community of these values and engage the community in conservation management;
- Use of the 'Trust Fund' has to be in accordance with these objectives. A grant of \$500,000 from the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (formally Road Traffic Authority) established the Trust Fund due to the internal by-pass approval affecting Squirrel Glider habitat and habitat connectivity.
- This grant in lieu of loss of Squirrel Glider habitat was stipulated to be spent on works detailed in the TTSCS (2004) in order to assist other threatened species as well as Squirrel Gliders.

VISION

Thurgoona / Wirlinga is widely recognised as a leading example of how to successfully balance urbanisation with the protection of threatened species, now and in 100 years' time.

MISSION

We are a medium-term not-for-profit organisation striving to maintain viable populations of local threatened species through research, on-ground conservation actions, and community collaboration and capacity building.

We do this through strong community leadership, attracting and strategically investing funds, and partnering with key biodiversity management stakeholders.

AIMS

RESEARCH	ON GROUND WORKS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING	GOVERNANCE / FINANCE / INVESTMENT
To research threatened species and the local community to help develop a long-term understanding of Thurgoona/Wirlinga as a priority landscape for biodiversity conservation.	To undertake and support strategic on-ground works, guided by research, to help maintain viable populations of threatened species in Thurgoona/ Wirlinga.	To engage and empower the local community through education and direct involvement, now and in the future, with the aim of inspiring lasting commitment to long-term biodiversity conservation.	To ensure best practise governance and financial sustainability of ACC. This includes the development and implementation of policies and guidelines which ensure viability of the organisation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2016-21)

The strategic priorities of Albury Conservation Company between 2016-21 are:

1. Implement plans funded by ACC addressing conservation of threatened species and social research in Thurgoona / Wirlinga.
2. Ensure financial stability of ACC through attracting >\$80,000 annually to maintain a workable capital principal of >\$400,000.
3. Comply with corporate responsibility requirements.
4. Sustain organisational viability.

This five-year plan reflects in detail these strategic priorities. The next five years are the "doing years" to build on significant past investment and planning.

The **NICHE** of Albury Conservation Company Ltd (ACC) is encapsulated by the following:

- ACC provides leadership where it is identified it needs to be the driver of change to achieve positive outcomes consistent with our objectives;
- ACC is apolitical, does not own or manage land, nor has financial interests that impact on its role.
- ACC invests its own funds and attracts /leverages external funds to be spent entirely on local biodiversity conservation;
- ACC proactively shares information (knowledge broker) for the benefit of the environment in Thurgoona/ Wirlinga;
- ACC has processes which are collaborative, cooperative and non-duplicative with other organisations/agencies;
- ACC works in the Thurgoona / Wirlinga area, but occasionally extends to the greater Albury area as required (e.g. Cat Tracker Project);
- ACC is cognisant of the important roles of other stakeholders in the Thurgoona / Wirlinga landscape and avoids duplication of effort and resources;
- ACC is flexible, efficient, responsive, and adaptive in its role in local biodiversity management.

The **ACHIEVEMENTS** of Albury Conservation Company Ltd (ACC) include:

Since 2006, considerable planning for action and establishment of ACC has occurred. The focus of the next five years will be implementation of the established building blocks of education, research, monitoring, governance, on-ground works and fundraising. The ACC Board recognises that the

engagement of a co-ordinator (Sam Niedra – Better State Environments) has been critical to the momentum of the company and continued engagement of a coordinator will be critical to the next implementation phase. Key ACC achievements include:

1. RESEARCH

- The initial aim of the ACC was conservation of the Squirrel Glider in Thurgoona. In order to establish benchmark data on Squirrel Gliders, in 2007 the ACC commissioned a research study entitled '**Population Viability Analysis for Squirrel Gliders in the Thurgoona and Albury Ranges region of NSW**' by Rodney van der Ree and Christopher Stewart from the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (ARCUE);
- In August 2010, research and management findings from the Squirrel Glider study by ARCUE were presented at a community workshop hosted by ACC. Inputs and feedback from this workshop provided valuable data from which ACC's Board could prepare a five-year Strategic Plan;
- In 2013, ACC co-funded Charles Sturt University (CSU) student Alexandra Knight's PhD on Sloane's Froglet, which found that Thurgoona was one of the few sites in the world where the frog naturally occurred. Since this study was conducted a Sloane's Froglet Working Group was established with the aim of conserving the species locally, and has resulted in the '**Sloane's Froglet Interim Habitat Guide and Management Recommendations**';
- One of the projects funded as part of the Community Grants Program included social research project undertaken by Dr Shelby Laird and Dr Rosemary Black (CSU) entitled '**Thurgoona and Wirlinga Community understanding and knowledge of Biodiversity**'. The study provides a rare insight into current resident's views and attitudes towards their local environment. The information gathered will help identify current opportunities to raise awareness and engage with the local community in biodiversity conservation activities. The study also provides a benchmark to enable tracking of resident's attitudes, values, and knowledge in relation to local biodiversity as development expands in the area;
- In 2016, in partnership with DI-Lands, ACC commissioned ARCUE to develop a '**Long-term Monitoring Plan of Squirrel Glider Populations in Thurgoona- Wirlinga**'. This plan aims to establish a whole-of-landscape approach and incorporate significant community involvement to monitor local Squirrel Glider populations and identify management strategies as the landscape undergoes significant change over the next 2-3 decades as Albury expands to the north;
- In August 2016, a community workshop sponsored by ACC was held to provide input and further develop the plan.

2. ON-GROUND WORKS

- In 2014/2015, ACC designed and delivered a '**Squirrel Glider Urban Nest Box Project**' that involved construction and installation of 100 nest boxes in potential Glider habitat at urban and peri-urban properties in Thurgoona and Splitters Creek. The project was delivered in partnership with Thurgoona Men's Shed and Parklands Albury Wodonga, with funding from the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GER);
- In 2012/13, ACC delivered a '**Community Grants Program**', investing \$30,000 into threatened species research, social research, biodiversity education, on-ground conservation works in the Thurgoona / Wirlinga area.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- In May 2012, ACC co-hosted, in conjunction with the Slopes to Summit (S2S) partnership of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GER), the 'Thurgoona BioBlitz', a two-day community event involving 300 people participating in expert-led wildlife surveys around Thurgoona;
- In 2015, ACC commenced a **Hollow-bearing tree (HBT) mapping and education project** in Thurgoona / Wirlinga, via a two-year funding agreement with the NSW Government's Environmental Trust (Education stream). To date, over 600 hollow-bearing trees have been mapped on roadsides, Bell's TSR, roadsides, Thurgoona Country Club Resort, CSU, and the Albury Environmental Lands, managed by the NSW Department of Industry – Lands (DI-Lands);
- In 2016, ACC began providing HBT data collected to AlburyCity for the establishment of a HBT overlay on council's internal mapping system, for access by staff involved in the Development Application (AD) process;
- Since 2006, ACC has developed a number of strategic partnerships over time, including with key land managers (e.g. NSW Department of Industry –Lands, Murray Local Land Services), biodiversity management agencies (e.g. NSW Office of Environment & Heritage), research bodies and educational institutions (e.g. Charles Sturt University, National Environment Centre), community groups (e.g. Thurgoona Men's Shed, Woolshed Thurgoona Landcare Group), and regional conservation partnerships (e.g. Slopes to Summit / Great Eastern Ranges Initiative).

4. GOVERNANCE / FINNANCE / INVESTMENT

ACC is successful at leveraging funding and other partnerships. It has secured \$110,000 in grants and matching funds from project partners to deliver local biodiversity related projects including mapping of hollow-bearing trees, building and installing nest boxes for Squirrel Gliders, and development of a 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan'. Though strategic investment of funds, ACC has developed a reputation as a local knowledge broker and capacity builder. We helped establish new Albury City Council mapping overlays of significant biodiversity assets (e.g. hollow-bearing trees, Sloane's Froglet), co-funded a Phd research study documenting the local population of Sloane's Froglet, and subsequently facilitated the 'Sloane's Froglet Working Group' formation

ABBREVIATIONS	
ACC	Albury Conservation Company LTD
AlburyCity	Albury City Council
ARCUE	Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology
BSE	Better State Environments
CSU	Charles Sturt University
DI Lands	NSW Department of Industry – Lands (Managers of Albury Environmental Land)
EPBC	Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
MLLS	Murray Local Land Services
NCT	Nature Conservation Trust
NEC	National Environment Centre
OEH	NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
RMS	NSW Roads and Maritime Service
RTA	NSW Roads and Traffic Authority
TCAG	Thurgoona Community Action Group

AMBITION 1: RESEARCH

AIM: To research threatened species and the local community to help develop a long-term understanding of Thurgoona/Wirlinga as a priority landscape for biodiversity conservation, and to help identify on-ground actions required to maintain viable populations of threatened species. Select a small number of projects and concentrate on them, don't spread ourselves too thin.

Action	Timeframe	Albury Conservation Company's Role	Role of Others	Measure / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
<p>1.1 Squirrel Glider Research</p> <p>a) Finalise 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan'</p> <p>b) Implement 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Program'</p> <p>c) Facilitate/ support complimentary research (e.g. nest boxes)</p>	<p>Final 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan' (ARCUE) to board by Dec 2016</p> <p>Implement the Plan starting in 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead and oversee various stages of project - Coordinator Engage partners to develop scope of monitoring program and resourcing (e.g. funding, labour) - Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARCUE – authors of Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan AlburyCity – land owner/manager, funder DI – Lands – land owner/manager, funder MLLS - funder OEH – funder (SOS) Other community (e.g. Landcare, local schools) – citizen science 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of the 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan' (the Plan) for Thurgoona/ Wirlinga. Funding of the Plan implementation through sourcing required budget (including capital items). The Plan reviewed annually and provided to the Board. Monitoring program enables statistically dependable tracking of the status of the Squirrel Glider population over the medium to long term. 100 local community members are engaged in delivery of the Plan, including key stakeholders and volunteers. Optimum number of nest boxes (e.g. how many more are required) for Thurgoona area is investigated and established.

<p>1.2 Habitat Mapping – Thurgoona / Wirlinga</p> <p>As a base for key native animal species. Funded via Saving Our Species (SOS) round 1.</p>	<p>Due Dec 2014 – not met.</p> <p>Due June 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with OEH during development of the mapping – Coordinator Support and assist OEH is required – Public Officer 	<p>OEH (Matt Cameron) - lead role</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat map finalised in format useful to ACC. Habitat connectivity gaps are highlighted in mapping and addressed with on-ground works (refer to 2.1).
<p>1.3 Cat Tracker project</p> <p>Albury pilot involving 150 domestic cats and their owners. Part of a national project.</p>	<p>Planning completed by Dec 2016</p> <p>Commence project in 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead and oversee various stages of project - Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillip Roetman (University of South Australia) – National program manager MLLS - co-funding (\$5k) DI Lands - co-funding (\$5k) Federal threatened species commissioner - advocate OEH – advocate Cat owners - participants 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 150 domestic cats and their owners are engaged in the project by 31 Dec 2017. Key program goals and outcomes are identified. Agreement signed - 2016. Community awareness about domestic cat behaviour in the Albury area is increased. Community awareness about responsible cat ownership in the Albury area is increased.

<p>1.4 Social research: Commission social research of the community's values, attitudes and awareness regarding the relationship between biodiversity conservation and urban development in the Thurgoona/ Wirlinga context.</p>	ASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant funding application – coordinator to lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSU – research partner ANU – research partner 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Future social studies informed by the 'Thurgoona and Wirlinga Community understanding and knowledge of Biodiversity' study in 2013 by Laird and Black (CSU).
<p>1.5 Sloane's Froglet Research</p> <p>a) ACC to continue involvement in SF working party led by OEH.</p> <p>b) Sponsor and progress the Sloane's Froglet nomination to the EPBC Act 1999</p>	<p>a) On-going b) On-going</p>	<p>a) ACC Board member (Damian Michael) to sit on working party b) ACC Public Officer and Michael Mulvany to coordinate further work on EPBC nomination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OEH – responsible for leading SF working group Federal Government - decision maker regarding nominations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Requests for information are responded to, particularly in Council habitat planning with special reference to Development Applications (DAs).
<p>1.6 Monitor other threatened species</p> <p>Determine and document the research and monitoring of other threatened species. Identify areas for research or action.</p>	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database largely complete, new research to be added as required and reported to Board. 	Liaison with others required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Threatened species database updated annually for consideration by the ACC board. Number of experts on specialised areas of conservation presenting at board meetings. Number of tertiary students undertaking complimentary research (1.1,1.2, 1.3, 1.4).

AMBITION 2: ON-GROUND WORKS

AIM: To undertake and support strategic on-ground works, guided by research, to help maintain viable populations of threatened species in Thurgoona/ Wirlinga. These works could include fencing, tree planting, weed control, pest control, nest box construction and installation, glider crossing enhancements, and reduction in any threatening process.

Action	Timeframe	Albury Conservation Company's Role	Role of Others	Measure / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
<p>2.1 On-ground Works Utilising the Habitat Mapping identify on-ground works and priorities. Advocate and facilitate for on-ground works. Works targeted towards key landscape connectivity outcomes that complement the work of partners.</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate and facilitate on ground works, including engaging and organising community - Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DI Lands – responsible AlburyCity – responsible RMS – responsible MLLS – responsible Private landholders- responsible Woolshed Thurgoona Landcare Group – responsible Others – responsible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Address critical issues identified during implementation of the Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan (e.g. mortality causes, movement gaps) to support maintenance of the population at a density of >0.7/hectare. Includes management interventions and on-ground actions. Identify and map hollow-bearing trees (HBTs) as per the NSW Environmental Trust funded project agreement. Improvement to the condition and connectivity of 10 hectares (annual target) of habitat through on-ground actions supported by ACC. Includes, but is not limited to, revegetation, weed control, nest box installation and maintenance. On-ground works measured against the 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan', 'Habitat mapping', and 'Sloane's Froglet research and Working Group recommendations'.

				5. Monitoring indicates that Squirrel Glider population is stable or increasing over time.
2.2 Sponsoring relevant community grant applications and works	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider sponsoring grant applications developed by community groups who may have the practical skills and human resources for project, but lack a suitable administrative structure - Coordinator and Public Officer. 	To seek appropriate projects, develop project brief, complete works.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$ value of projects supported. Extent of on-ground works and/or community engagement / capacity building.
2.3 Strategic Conservation Land Purchases & Donations Research and identify key land parcels for covenants and develop strategy based on purchasing land with revolving funds	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and advise board - Coordinator ACC board responsible (Nigel Jones – board member) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with others where required (e.g. DI Lands, Albury Wodonga Corporation). Nature Conservation Trust of NSW - responsible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Business Plan developed. Area of habitat restored. Area protected by covenants Agreement made with a finance institution (e.g. bank)

AMBITION 3: Community Engagement & Capacity Building

AIM: To engage and empower the local community through education and direct involvement, now and in the future, with the aim of inspiring lasting commitment to long-term biodiversity conservation. A key message is that Thurgoona's a special place for wildlife and we can all do our bit to help.

Action	Timeframe	Albury Conservation Company's Role	Role of Others	Measure / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
<p>3.1 – Inform, inspire and guide</p> <p>Communicate with and involve other stakeholders in relation to biodiversity, habitat retention, threatened species, pest plants and animals and how they can make a difference.</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new residents • developers • groups/ schools • private landholders 	2016 - 2021	Coordinator Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S2S – possible partner • MLLS - possible partner • Council planning & engineering departments, developers and construction industry • CSU • Students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key actions in 'Education Plan' progressing to Board's satisfaction. 2. One (1) new strategic partnership developed annually. 3. Number of community members involved in 'Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan' implementation. 4. Number of community members involved in 'Cat Tracker' (Albury Pilot). 5. Number of community members engaged in fundraising activities (e.g. Edge Pledge). 6. Media items generated by ACC 7. Positive improvements in community awareness and attitudes (relating to local biodiversity) measured by surveys.

				8. Education Plan updated as required.
3.2 – Develop, maintain, and review engagement tools, including ACC website and social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).	On-going	Coordinator		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tool kit is being utilised, maintained and improved. 2. Number of community members engaged 3. Number of links from relevant web pages 4. Traffic to ACC website and new subscriber numbers. 5. ACC Social Media traffic/reach/number of likes and comments.
3.3 - Develop Hollow-bearing tree (HBT) overlay and develop threatened species overlays for Council reference.	2016 - 2021	Coordinator Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AlburyCity – Working Group member and HBT overlay on Council’s weave mapping software. • DI- Lands – Working Group member 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HBT records provided by ACC to and uploaded by AlburyCity onto internal mapping overlay (Weave); 2. Adoption and recognition by AlburyCity reflected in the Development Application (DA) approvals.

AMBITION 4: Governance / Finance / Investment

AIM: To ensure best practise governance and financial sustainability of ACC. This includes the development and implementation of policies and guidelines which ensure viability of the organisation. This includes the development and implementation of policies and guidelines which ensure viability of the organisation.

Action	Timeframe	Albury Conservation Company's Role	Role of Others	Measure / Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
<p>4.1 - Income Attraction and management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore making overdraft procedure • seek outside sources of income (e.g. grants, donations, corporate sponsorships, contract work) • align with government priorities and goals 	2016-21	<p>Coordinator Board members</p>	<p>Edge Pledge Others?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enact ACC's Fundraising Strategy. 2. Develop and implement a Philanthropy Strategy. 3. Attract \$80k/year income generated from a variety of sources including grants, philanthropy, and sponsorship. 4. Retention of a workable capital base principal >\$400,000.

4.2 - Risk plan review	Every 12 months	Responsible Public Officer to lead review annually	N/A	Consistent lowering of either likelihood or consequence for each of the four major risks on an annual basis.
4.3 - Two-year financial plan review	Every 12 months	Responsible Public Officer to lead review, responsibility rests with Board	N/A	Reviews completed.
4.4 - Contractual Agreement	2016-21	Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurgoona Men's Shed – nest box agreement • ARCUE – Squirrel Glider Monitoring Plan agreement • Better State Environments (current contract expires 30/06/2017) 	Honour and manage agreements and enter new agreements where appropriate.
4.5 –Board Membership Guidelines	2016-21	Responsible	N/A	Develop and implement guidelines.
4.6 - Coordinators Role & Employment	2016-21	Engage	N/A	Increase co-ordinator engagement time with contract modification.
4.7 – Determine the future direction of ACC	2016-21	Decide	Negotiations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Strategic Plan annually. • Continuation of ACC in its current form, or in agreement with a partner (e.g. <i>Petaurus</i>, a Bank, BCT, Landcare, AlburyCity).