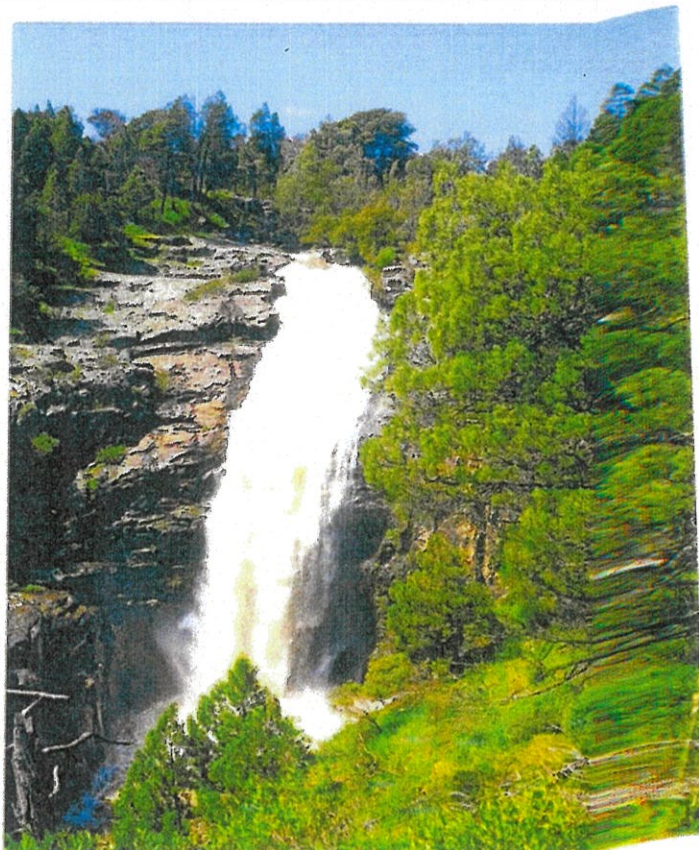


Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra Gorges (including Ginninderra Falls) National Park Proposal



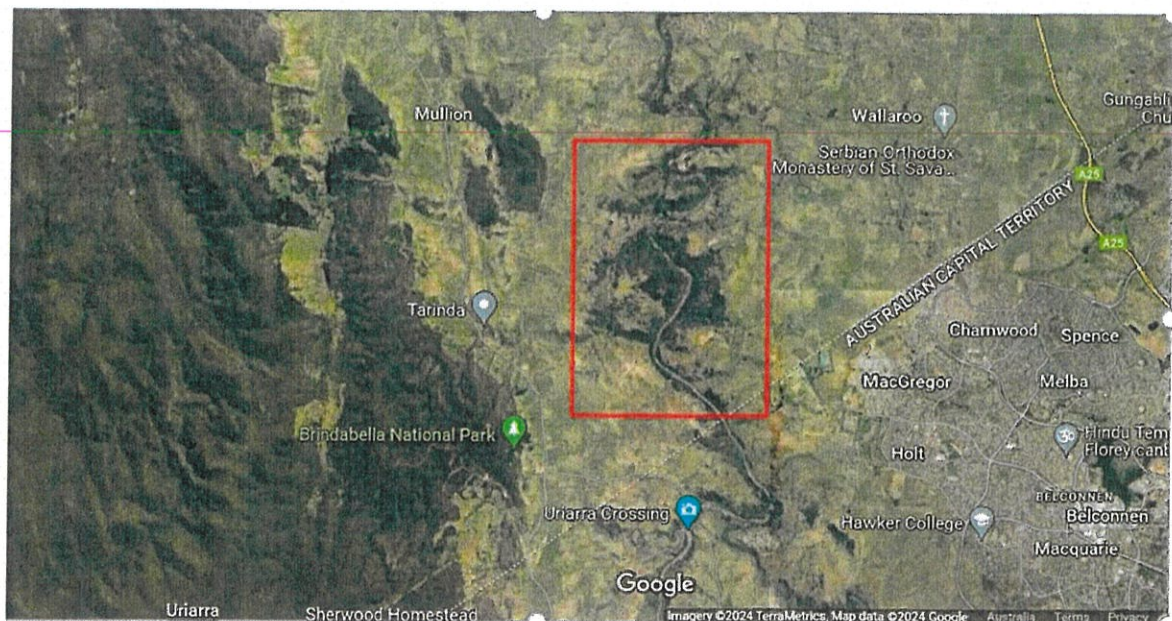
On the outskirts of Belconnen, Australia's second largest river, the magnificent Murrumbidgee River, at the foot of the Brindabellas, is the region's best kept secret - an area with over 20,000 years of indigenous custodianship rich in biodiversity, cultural heritage and scenic values supporting a range of species which need our help to protect them.

The area includes the Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra Gorges as well as the Ginninderra Falls. An area with the most spectacular, unique and largely unknown natural areas in South East New South Wales bordering with the ACT. This is a special spot that can be enjoyed by thousands of people in the local region, not just now but for generations to come.

The Ginninderra Falls Association and the Voices of West Belconnen are advocating that this area next to the ACT and located in the local Government area of Yass Valley Council, be designated as a National Park, so that threatened species can be protected and that the pristine beauty of the local area can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Ginninderra Falls Association and the Voices of West Belconnen are also concerned the proposed urban development into this region and the extension of the ACT border west, will have long lasting impacts on the natural resources of the region as well as on Australia's second longest river.

The area is located to the west of the ACT Border in New South Wales (Figure 1). The extension of the ACT border to include this land is yet to be approved by the Commonwealth Government.



Like the Tidbinbilla nature reserve the area is rich with watercourses, gorges, rapids and waterfalls on the Murrumbidgee River and lower Ginninderra Creek with surrounding grass land and forest areas, major hilltops and elevated topographic features. This area adjoins the Woodstock Nature Reserve that includes the Murrumbidgee River corridor as far upstream as Uriarra Crossing.

In years gone by Ginninderra Falls have been an attractive tourist destination open to the public. Also, the stretch of the Murrumbidgee River from the ACT border downstream to the river bend at Willow Tree Waterhole, flows through a gorge of outstanding interest and beauty and has long been attractive to visitors with diverse interests.

Murrumbidgee River

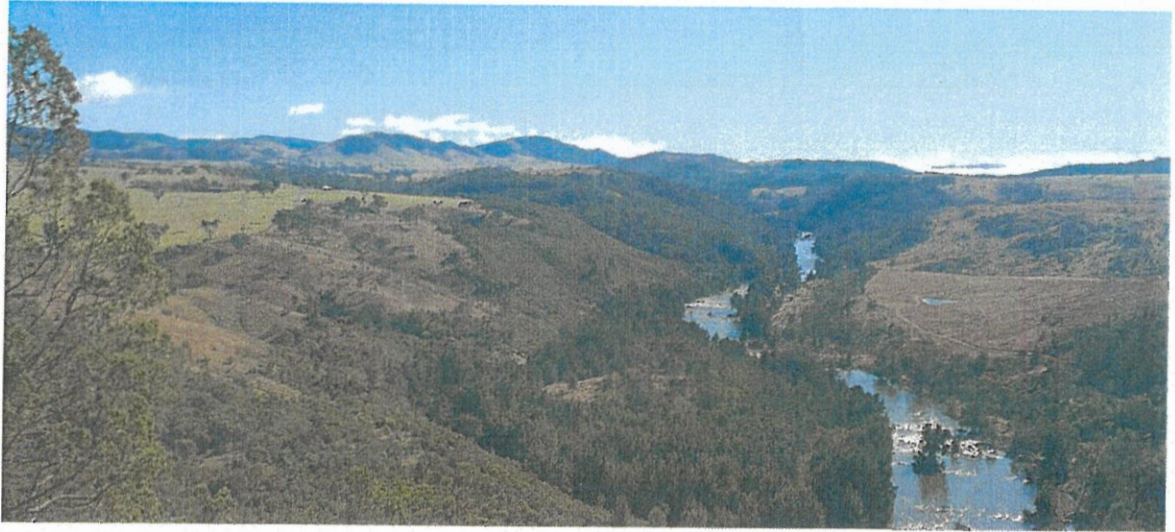
One of the jewels in Canberra's crown is the beautiful [Murrumbidgee River](#). This river starts at Peppercorn Hill, only 84 kilometres from the Nation's Capital and flows 66 kilometres through the Australian Capital Territory. In total the river flows 1,600 kilometres from its headwaters in the Australian Alps, Kosciuszko National Park to its junction with the Murray River near Balranald in NSW. The Murrumbidgee River and its catchment are a significant part of the [Murray-Darling Basin](#).

The following map shows how the Murrumbidgee River meanders its way through the Australian Capital Territory as well as through New South Wales and the proposed Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra Gorges National Park.



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-of-the-Murray-Darling-Basin-within-Australia-showing-the-major-rivers-and-key_fig1_264121933

One of Canberra's most stunning, spectacular views is from Shephard's Lookout with views across the wonderful river to the sweeping mountain ranges of the Brindabellas in the west. The area is absolutely beautiful and not widely known across Canberra.



Shepherds Lookout is accessed via the parking area three kilometres from the last traffic island on Stockdill Drive and walking through Woodstock Nature Reserve for an impressive view along the Murrumbidgee. The return walk is only 1.2km; an easy 45 minutes.

The forested areas around the Murrumbidgee River would be magnificent for a national park. Until now no buildings or development have been visible in the above view, but disappointingly this is changing with the Ginninderry development now visible on the far right.



Ginninderra Falls

The Ginninderra Falls is a magnificent place that is closed to the public as the falls are located on private land. Ginninderra Creek rises on the northern border of the ACT and NSW, sourced from the Spring Range, located north-east of Hall. The creek flows generally south-west across the Ginninderra Plain, through the Gungahlin and Belconnen regions in Canberra, and then heads west crossing the western border between the ACT and flowing into NSW.

The creek descends 168 metres (551 ft) over its 23 kilometres (14 mi) course. The creek also flows over the Ginninderra Falls, descending 41 metres (135 ft), and through Ginninderra Gorge, to its confluence with the Murrumbidgee River. The catchment of Ginninderra Creek covers approximately 32,000 hectares (79,000 acres).



Riverside Parkland Pavilion

The proposed [Riverside Parkland](#) alongside the Murrumbidgee Gorge, must be opposed. It impinges on aboriginal pathways and the River corridor.



Walking Tracks

A new collection of walking tracks were officially opened by the Ginninderra Conservation Trust in May 2024. Further tracks will be constructed by the end of 2024. An additional 10km of walking tracks will complement the existing 3.4 kilometres Strathnairn to Shepherds track and the proposed Ginninderra National Park.

A landscape at risk

This unique area is starting to gradually be fringed by houses and urban development. A new development is underway that will house many thousands of people in the area. The land in NSW that was zoned for environmental management has been rezoned to general residential, meaning that houses could be built in an area that was once there to protect the environment. The adjacent land in the ACT was previously rezoned for housing.

Development approval is still needed in NSW. With the added pressure of people living closely nearby, we need to ensure that the environmental and heritage values of the area are adequately protected. There have also been concerns raised by researchers and experts about the design of the proposed conservation corridor and potential impacts on threatened species as well as fire risk in the area.

An ABC [7.30 Report](#) by Emily Baker on cross-border Housing Development (broadcast on 14 February 2024) showed plans by the ACT Government to request the ACT border be extended into New South Wales to house some 30,000 people along the NSW-ACT border. According to the episode the area in yellow below would approximately be the extension of the ACT into NSW (based on the diagram below that was provided in the report). If the area is transferred to the ACT Government, it should manage the conservation of this area.



Over the years there has been restricted public access to the rural land in the area which has become grazing country. Increasingly there has been diversification into vineyards, small farming, hobby farms, horse breeding, and quarrying of gravel deposits adjacent to upper Ginninderra Falls.

However, there is now a recognition that the Aboriginal conservation, heritage and recreational value of the area to the Southern Eastern NSW and ACT communities absolutely outweighs its agricultural and real estate value. The inherent beauty and amenity offered by the proposed Murrumbidgee – Ginninderra Gorges National Park strongly supports a change in land use from private to public ownership.

For about 100 years generations of visitors have been coming to this part of NSW to admire the river systems, rapids and waterfalls. Let us re-establish long-term public access. Future generations will certainly appreciate our foresight and vision.

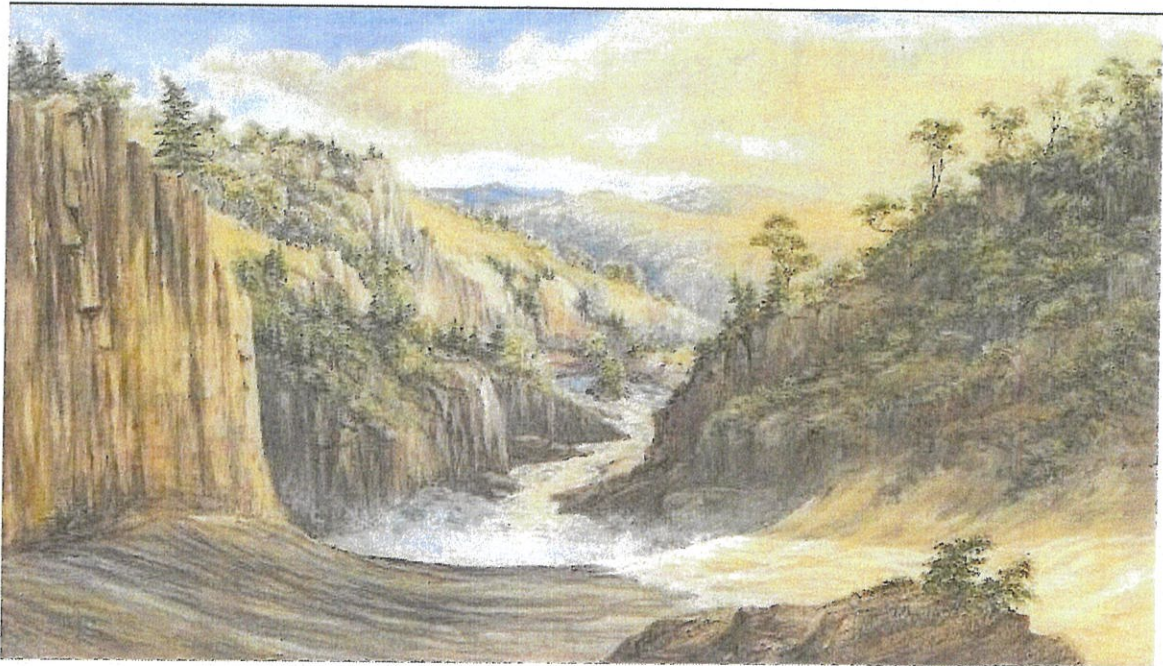
Inevitably the acquisition of some freehold land will be required to establish the national park. The proponents of this national park urge the NSW and ACT Governments to enter into negotiations with landowners for the acquisition of the rural land areas affected.

Fire Risk

The proposed development in the blue circle below is extremely close to the forested areas of the Brindabellas. This fire risk and proximity of the Ginninderry development to the Brindabellas was not raised as a risk nor as an issue in the 7.30 Report. The fire risk arises from the proximity of the Brindabellas, and the orientation and slope of the land bordering the development, along with the prevailing wind direction, facilitates dynamic fire propagation as was seen in the devastating fires in 2003.



Ginninderra Creek has been recognised in some capacity for over 150 years. *“The Ginindarra (Ginninderra) Creek looking to Murrumbidgee hills, County Murray, N. S. Wales” - painting by Gordon Cumming, 1875 (National Library of Australia).*



Elioth Gruner's work titled "Weetangera" (<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/6413/>) was painted in 1937. A covered viewing stand has been built on the path from The Link to the pathway to Shepherds Lookout at the point from where Gruner supposedly created this artwork of the Murrumbidgee and surrounds ("Gruner's Lookout").

We owe it to future generations to preserve the beauty of the land in the proposed Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra Gorges so it can be enjoyed and appreciated as much as it was appreciated decades ago.

Let's create a National Park that can be enjoyed to ensure that people can enjoy the beauty of the park, the beauty of Ginninderra Falls into the future. This is a far better outcome than turning such a beautiful part of Southern Eastern NSW into a housing development that will be a high fire risk.

We are at a crossroads. We as community advocates support better management and preservation of the area's biodiversity. Development should never be at all costs. What we decide now will determine what is left for future generations. Development must be kept well away from the Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra Creek corridors. It should be carefully

managed and its management should be carefully oversighted jointly by the ACT, NSW and Federal Governments.

There is too much to lose, if the development affects the waterways (especially the Murray Darling Basin) and this beautiful area.