



## Get to Know the Croke Place Wetlands

The ACT Government under the Waterways Program has recently built a number of wetlands across the ACT with the intention of improving the water quality of our waterways.

Belconnen has three of these projects. As Gungahlin has developed over the last 20 years, the previous system and Lake Ginninderra (built in 1974) have struggled to keep up with the increased pressures of heavy runoff from suburban areas. The three new sites were chosen as the best spots to catch that runoff and funnel it into the wetlands where it can be filtered and slowed down so the sediment load is reduced and the erosion damage is minimal.

The projects in Belconnen are expected to remove approximately 112,300 kg/year of suspended solids, 158 kg/year of phosphorus and 804 kg/yr of nitrogen from the natural drainage system.



The **Croke place Wetlands** in Evatt is one of the largest groups of these new wetlands, being over 5,100 m<sup>2</sup> in area, made up of 2 wetlands, a sediment pond and a revegetated swale. Part of the creek which was heavily infested with woody weeds was cleared so that the water could flow easily.

A gross pollutant trap is at the northern end of the construction, at a maintenance track. This will stop large rubbish entering the wetland.



The wetlands, when the vegetation is fully established, will then filter and slow down the water flow. The nutrients filtered out will then be used by the reeds and other vegetation. The pink area shown in the map (at the end of this article) is designed to be ephemeral, so it will only hold water some of the year. Ephemeral ponds support different species of plants and reeds that can tolerate drying out, and so provide that extra filtering ability to be able to deal with higher flow.



Many have asked "Why the wall of rocks?". This is built this way so as to protect the wetlands from high flood events. It is to be hoped that it will also provide habitat for lizards and snakes.

Along McGill street is a grassed swale, which is a depression in the ground. This kicks-in in a flooding event as well as directing excess stormwater flow in some sort of ordered way, meandering over the

grass for as long as possible allowing sediment to be dropped out and some of that water to be absorbed before the gush makes it to the creek.



Of course, this will also provide a wonderful habitat for all manner of animals and birds, and a lovely spot for locals to grow to love. I have noticed many more people using the area for exercise and dog walking that previous, which is great to see more people enjoying their local environment.

If you take a careful look at the wooden seating around this and the other Healthy Waterways sites, you will see that they are made from the timber from the original Tharwa Bridge, and made by a Tharwa local, which is a lovely nod to local history.



Due to the current COVID-19 epidemic, GCG's planned walk around the wetlands was cancelled, but we are still keen to explore the idea of forming a stewardship group here when the current situation passes. If you or others you know are interested in the site, please let me (Fiona Spier) know.

Until then, remember that being outside is great for our mental health, so, keeping within Government advice on social distancing and COVID-19, why not take a walk around the wetland yourself?

(Info and map from the Healthy Waterways website,  
<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/water/ACT-Healthy-Waterways>)



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