RECOMMENDATIONS

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The following recommendations are to assist the ACT Government to make strategic and practical decisions, and undertake specific actions to improve environmental outcomes. The recommendations aim to focus ACT Government effort where it is likely to have the greatest impact including opportunities to integrate multiple environmental outcomes into government policies and programs.

Under the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*, the ACT Government is required to present a statement that sets out its responses to these recommendations within six months of tabling this *State of the Environment 2019* report in the Legislative Assembly.[1] Government responses are monitored and reported in OCSE annual reports.

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1   *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*, section 19(3).

The ACT Government undertake the following:

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: establish a sustainable funding model for the conservation of biodiversity, environmental protection, water management, the reduction of fire risks, and citizen science initiatives to assist in the planning, prioritisation and acquittal of programs and works.

Recommendation 2: establish data management architecture, especially for environmental issues, to address cross-portfolio communication needs.

Recommendation 3: establish a mechanism to ensure the alignment of ACT ministerial arrangements and the promotion of information sharing on the basis that environmental issues are the concern of 'one government' and across portfolios.

Recommendation 4: identify opportunities to improve collaboration with the NSW Government on cross-jurisdictional natural resource management. This should include participation in data collection programs and active management of natural resource management pressures.

Recommendation 5: ensure community participation in the design of all new *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* strategic assessments and ensure that information flow about offsets, implementation plans, and programs is publicly accessible and understandable, regular, targeted, and subject to community and other consultation.

Recommendation 6: lead collaborative networks where regional policy and operational matters require cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

INDIGENOUS MATTERS

Recommendation 7: continue consultation with Ngunnawal people to:

- explore the potential of developing a unified Framework for Cultural Indicators in respect of cultural water and cultural burning
- explore the management potential of an Indigenous Seasonal Calendar
- consider the establishment of an Indigenous River Rangers program, and
- establish a specific category of Indigenous heritage grants.

SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

Recommendation 8: continue to explore the use of 'deliberative democracy' for environmental initiatives in accordance with the aspirations of the *ACT Whole of Government Communications and Engagement Plan 2019* and in collaboration with the *Climate Change Strategy 2019–25* Community Liaison Team.

Recommendation 9: specifically provide for the recognition of citizen science and community environmental action with a targeted awards program.

URBAN TREES

Recommendation 10: advance Action 1 of the *Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City (*2019) by convening an environmental-economic accounts steering committee with representatives from government, academics and the community.

Recommendation 11: continue to collaborate with other jurisdictions and research institutes to generate the evidence base for appropriate urban forest understorey and other plantings, having specific regard to climate change implications.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Recommendation 12: engage the community in consultation about and the design of the Social Cost of Carbon mechanism under consideration in the *Climate Change Strategy 2019–25*.

Recommendation 13: investigate opportunities to increase carbon uptake and storage in natural ecosystems and urban environments.

Recommendation 14: encourage and provide incentives for the development and uptake of distributed energy storage and microgrid technology in domestic, commercial, and government buildings and infrastructure.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Waste

Recommendation 15: advance its contribution to adopting a circular economy in accordance with the National Waste Strategy.

Transport

Recommendation 16: explore incentives to increase the uptake of public transport, car and ride sharing options, and active travel, including cycling amongst women and girls.

Recommendation 17: consider implementing innovative community engagement programs which encourage active travel, including the establishment of car-free streets and car-free dates as a part of the ACT festival calendar.

Recommendation 18: hasten the electrification of the ACT bus fleet.

Recommendation 19: promote the use of digital technology applications to streamline the uptake of public transport options.

AIR

Recommendation 20: build on the incentives to encourage the replacement of wood heaters, specifically targeting the Tuggeranong Valley.

Recommendation 21: increase the number of National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure compliance monitoring stations.

Recommendation 22: urgently undertake an assessment of air pollutant emissions from diffuse sources to update the National Pollutant Inventory data (1999).

Recommendation 23: in collaboration with health professionals, improve knowledge of the impacts of air pollution on human health and the associated costs to the health system and economy.

LAND

Recommendation 24: improve knowledge on land use change in the ACT. This could be achieved through the development of annual land accounts using the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting framework.

BIODIVERSITY

Recommendation 25: increase the protection of mature and hollow-bearing trees to maintain critical habitat and provide incentives for rural landholders to protect paddock trees.

Recommendation 26: expand its communication strategy in respect of biodiversity and environmental issues and encourage ACT Government employees to make biodiversity reports available to the community in innovative ways.

WATER

Recommendation 27: institute a State of the Canberra Lakes reporting initiative, commencing in 2020.

Recommendation 28: produce an annual recreational water quality report that includes monitoring results, investigations into the main sources of pollutants, recommended actions to improve water quality, and assessments of management effectiveness.

Recommendation 29: establish a government reporting framework for the assessment of aquatic ecosystem health and water quality. This should incorporate work undertaken for the Catchment Health Indicator Program and produce public reports at appropriate intervals to provide meaningful assessments.

Recommendation 30: ensure implementation plans are produced for the Molonglo River Reserve, Lower Cotter Catchment and Googong Foreshore management plans.

Recommendation 31: provide incentives to increase wastewater recycling and the use of non-potable water by the community.

Recommendation 32: identify opportunities to develop integrated water cycle management (as well as water-sensitive urban design) across new and existing urban areas, capturing and using stormwater and creating biodiversity habitat.

Recommendation 33: review codes which relate to flooding and finalise the 2016 flood strategy and associated flood mapping.

FIRE

Recommendation 34: ensure tolerable fire intervals are considered in decision frameworks for prescribed burns.

Recommendation 35: regularly evaluate and report publicly on the commitment to ecological and cultural burning and the outcomes of these activities.