

**Commissioner for the Environment
Australian Capital Territory**

Annual Report 2004–05

Australian Capital Territory Government



Contact Officer

Dr Helen Sims

Manager

Office of the Commissioner for the Environment

Email: helen.sims@act.gov.au

Government implementation of recommendations made by the Commissioner for the Environment can be traced through previous annual reports, which are available from the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment, PO Box 356, Dickson ACT 2602.

Telephone: 02 6207 2626

Fax: 02 6207 2630

Email: envcomm@act.gov.au

Website: <http://www.envcomm.act.gov.au>

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TRANSMITTAL CERTIFICATE



**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT ACT**

ABN: 52 427 642 151

Mr Jon Stanhope MLA
Minister for the Environment
ACT Legislative Assembly
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

This Report has been prepared under section 5(1) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and in accordance with the requirements referred to in the Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions. It has been prepared in conformity with other legislation applicable to the preparation of the annual report by the Commissioner for the Environment, in particular the requirements of the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993*.

I hereby certify that the attached annual report is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment during the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 has been included and that it complies with the Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions.

I also hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with the Public Sector Management Standard 1, Part 4.

Section 13 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* requires that you cause a copy of the report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly within three months of the end of the financial year.

Yours faithfully,

Rosemary Purdie
Commissioner
31 August 2005

Level 6, 220 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon
Commissioner: Dr Rosemary Purdie
Phone: (02) 6207 2626 Fax: (02) 6207 2630 PO Box 356 Dickson ACT 2602
Email: envcomm@act.gov.au
Website: www.envcomm.act.gov.au

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSMITTAL CERTIFICATE	I
PART A: COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW	1
A.1 OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY	1
<i>Role, outcomes and objectives</i>	1
<i>Clients, customers and stakeholders</i>	1
<i>Mission and values</i>	2
<i>Organisational environment</i>	2
<i>Role in administration of legislation or other regulatory activities</i>	3
A.2 MAJOR ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE REPORTING YEAR	3
A.3 OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL RESULTS	4
A.4 OUTLOOK FOR THE COMING YEAR.....	5
PART B: AGENCY PERFORMANCE	6
B.1 KEY STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS.....	6
<i>Key result area—State of the Environment reporting</i>	6
<i>Key result area—Investigations</i>	7
<i>Special annual reporting requirements</i>	9
<i>Significant impacts on the environment</i>	9
<i>Progress on implementation of recommendations from SoE reports</i>	9
<i>ACT 2003 SoE Report</i>	12
<i>ACT 2000 SoE Report</i>	55
<i>ACT 1997 SoE Report</i>	59
B.2 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT	60
B.3 ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT STRATEGY	61
B.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	61
B.5 MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK	61
B.6 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REPORTING	61
B.7 ACT WOMEN'S PLAN	61
PART C: MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION	62
C.1 MANAGING OUR PEOPLE	62
C.1.1 <i>Human resources performance and analysis</i>	62
C.1.2 <i>Staffing profile</i>	62
C.1.3 <i>Culture and values</i>	63
C.1.4 <i>Workplace diversity</i>	63
C.1.5 <i>Workplace health and safety</i>	63
C.1.6 <i>Learning and development</i>	63
C.1.7 <i>Workplace relations</i>	64
C.2 GOVERNANCE	64
C.2.1 <i>Internal accountability structures and processes</i>	64
C.2.2 <i>Strategic and organisational planning</i>	64
C.2.3 <i>Fraud prevention</i>	65
C.2.4 <i>Risk management and internal audit arrangements</i>	65
C.2.5 <i>External scrutiny</i>	65
C.2.6 <i>Reports required by legislation</i>	65
C.2.7 <i>Sustainability and environment</i>	66
PART D: ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	68
D.1 AGENCY FINANCIAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	68
D.2 ASSET MANAGEMENT	68
D.3 CAPITAL WORKS MANAGEMENT.....	68
D.4 PROCUREMENT CONTRACTING PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES	68
D.5 GOVERNMENT CONTRACTUAL DEBT (INTEREST).....	68

APPENDICES.....	69
1. FINANCIAL REPORTS	69
1.1 <i>Financial statements</i>	69
1.2 <i>External sources of labour and services</i>	69
2. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY DATA REPORTS	69
2.1 <i>Legislation</i>	69
2.2 <i>Advisory and consultative boards and committees</i>	70
2.3 <i>Service purchasing arrangements, community grants, assistance, sponsorship</i>	70
2.4 <i>Legislative Assembly Committee inquiries and reports</i>	70
2.5 <i>Government inquiries and reports</i>	70
2.6 <i>Reports by Auditor-General</i>	70
2.7 <i>Reports by the Ombudsman</i>	70
GLOSSARY, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	71
INDEX	72
COMPLIANCE INDEX.....	75

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Complaints and inquiries received by the Commissioner.....	8
Table 2: Summary of progress on implementation of recommendations from 2003, 2000 and 1997 SoE reports	10
Table 3: Staffing profile.....	62
Table 4: Age profile.....	62
Table 5: Output 1.1.1 Preparation of the Australian Capital Region State of the Environment Report 2004.....	69
Table 6: Other contracts let.....	69

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Australian Capital Region for SoE reporting	7
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PART A: COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW

A.1 OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY

Role, outcomes and objectives

The role of the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment is set out in the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993*. Our major functions are to:

- produce State of the Environment (SoE) reports for the ACT
- investigate complaints from the community regarding the management of the environment by the ACT Government and its agencies
- conduct investigations as directed by the Minister
- initiate investigations into actions of an agency where those actions would have a substantial impact on the environment of the ACT
- make recommendations for consideration by government and include in our annual report the outcomes of those recommendations.

At the request of the local governments who are members of the Regional Leaders Forum, we also prepare State of the Environment reports for the Australian Capital Region, on a fee-for-service basis.

In carrying out these functions, and consistent with the intent of our enabling legislation, my office aims to contribute to government decision-making in a manner that helps improve the overall management of the ACT's environment.

Clients, customers and stakeholders

Our customers and stakeholders are residents of the ACT and beyond, and are from both Government and the community. They include:

Government:

- the ACT Minister for the Environment
- the ACT Legislative Assembly
- all ACT Government agencies
- the ACT Government's regional partners.

Community:

- all residents in the ACT and beyond who have an interest in the health of the ACT's environment and that in the surrounding region
- people with a grievance about the way the ACT Government or its agencies are managing the Territory's environment, which has not been resolved through other channels.

Mission and values

Our mission is—*To develop understanding of changes in the condition of the environment and the reasons for these, and to encourage all sectors of the community to progressively improve the environment, and so work towards sustainability.*

Our vision is—*A society with the will to achieve a sustainable high quality environment for all.*

In working towards this vision, we recognise that

- individual and government decision-making aimed at achieving sustainability must consider the costs and benefits for the natural, social and economic aspects of the environment
- our natural environment must be managed in an ecologically sustainable way for our society and economy to remain healthy.

Our values—guide the way we interact with each other and with all our stakeholders:

- highest integrity
- ethical approach
- honesty
- respect (for different cultures, opinions and values)
- commitment
- trust and trustworthiness
- empathy, fairness and courtesy.

Organisational environment

Our organisation is a very small one, with a part-time, independent Commissioner (officially eight days a month), assisted by two full-time permanent staff. Temporary staff are appointed cyclically for SoE reporting purposes or for specific projects. As Commissioner, I report directly to the Minister for the Environment.

Because of the role of the Commissioner, our office processes must, by their nature, be, and be seen to be, independent. The following operational principles provide the basis for the way we do our work and aim to achieve professional excellence:

- be objective
- have transparent, inclusive processes
- seek to use the best available knowledge
- take a holistic view (across all aspects of the environment and across the whole of government)
- provide independent analysis and process, based on a cooperative approach
- give balanced consideration to social, economic and environmental values
- strive for continuous improvement
- do the best we can with the resources we have.

Because of the small size of the organisation, the office is supported by a major agency (Chief Minister's Department, through Environment ACT) for financial reporting and support, personnel delegations and support, and a range of other ACT Government initiatives. Details of these are provided in entries under Parts B and C of this report.

Role in administration of legislation or other regulatory activities

The *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* is the enabling legislation. The office administers no other legislation and, as Commissioner, I have no regulatory activities.

During the year, the office liaised with a range of ACT Government agencies whose work is relevant to recommendations arising from the 2003 ACT State of the Environment Report and/or whose work was relevant to inquiries and complaints lodged with my office. The office also worked closely with member councils of the Australian Capital Region as part of its role in preparing their four-yearly State of the Environment reports.

A.2 MAJOR ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE REPORTING YEAR

As the incoming Commissioner at the start of the current financial year, my initial challenge was to understand the roles and functions of the office and the associated administrative requirements and issues. My two main administrative objectives were to establish good personal working relationships with key government and community stakeholders, building on the networks of the previous Commissioner, and to advise government on issues associated with a review of the office that was completed prior to my appointment. Our main organisational objective for the year was to prepare a Regional State of the Environment Report by 30 June 2005, a commitment made by the office prior to my commencement. Key achievements, issues and challenges associated with these objectives follow.

In my first six months I met with a wide range of stakeholders, gained a general impression of what they perceived to be the main issues relevant to my functions, and agreed on working protocols with key agencies. Because of the workload associated with preparing the regional SoE report, it has not been possible to maintain regular contact with most of these stakeholders.

In my annual report for 2003–04 I referred to the review of the role and functions of the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment that Dr Baker had initiated prior to his departure. The Government released its formal response to the review recommendations on 1 February 2005. As part of this, Government noted that it “supports and values the continuing role of the Commissioner in preparing State of Environment reports and acting as an Environmental Ombudsman”.

Recommendations 9, 12 and 13 in the above review related to increasing my office's resources. To provide further information relevant to these recommendations, and to be consistent with the Government's response to them, I reviewed the resource needs of my office and provided a report to the Minister. Based on this review, I also prepared a budget proposal for increased resources for an additional permanent position within the office and for a Commissioner-initiated investigation. I declined to include in the proposal provision for any substantial increase in the level of my appointment (recommendation 13), until I could make an informed assessment of what would be required for a Commissioner for the Environment to be fully effective, based on work records for a 12-month period. My proposal was not successful.

Preparation of the Regional SoE Report was the most time and resource intensive activity of my office during 2004–05. It involves preparing individual SoE reports for each of the 17 NSW Local Government Authorities

that, along with the ACT, make up the Australian Capital Region. Although we made substantial progress in writing up the indicators that underpin these reports, we did not meet our identified output of completion by 30 June 2005.

A number of factors contributed to not meeting the agreed deadline for the Regional SoE Report. The task of completing the individual SoE reports was made more complex because of changes to the boundaries of some shires (eight of the member councils were amalgamated into five new council areas in February 2004) and because three new councils had joined the Australian Capital Region. Both these changes meant that many of the fundamental maps and comprehensive datasets completed for the 2000 SoE Report could no longer be used as the basis for updates in the 2004 report, as they had to be redone. The implications for data collection and interpretation also proved more time- and resource-intensive than previously estimated.

Other key factors included the three month time lapse between the departure of the previous Commissioner and my commencement, delays in the recruitment of two fixed-term staff (they did not commence until November 2004), delays associated with the time required for the new staff to become oriented with the specifics of the SoE work and to establish the necessary networks, and the early departure of one fixed-term staff to take up a permanent position elsewhere. A significant proportion of the manager's time in the first quarter was also concentrated on my orientation as incoming Commissioner, leaving few office resources to focus on the SoE Report in that critical time. The need for the manager to orient new staff also reduced considerably the amount of time she could spend in preparing SoE material in the second and third quarters.

One additional achievement during the year was the preparation of a draft *Corporate Plan 2005–06 to 2008–09*. The plan has identified five key result areas and outputs, based on existing legislative requirements and commitments as well as perceived needs.

A.3 OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL RESULTS

State of the Environment reports are the major output of the office. The *ACT 2003 State of the Environment Report* (2003 SoE Report) had been tabled on 31 March 2004. Government released its response to the 25 recommendations in September 2004. The ACT Government agreed with 23 of the 25 recommendations and disagreed with two of them. Details of the recommendations and Government's progress during the year in implementing these and some recommendations from earlier SoE reports are outlined in Part B of this report.

In accordance with the enabling legislation, within 12 months of the ACT 2003 SoE Report being tabled, I recommended to the Minister for the Environment that the next ACT SoE Report be for the reporting period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2007, and that it be due for submission to the Minister by 31 December 2007. These dates make the reporting period consistent with the new four-yearly electoral period, and more closely aligned with the requirement for SoE reporting by NSW local governments. These dates have not yet been formalised by Government.

During the year the budget for this office was put under considerable strain due to unavoidable increases in some administrative costs and increased rent. The latter arose because the ACT Planning and Land Authority (the Authority) requested we relocate from our former premises in Dame Pattie Menzies House, which we had used over the past four years, to enable its use by Authority staff. While the Authority paid for all relocation and fit out expenses, rent for the new premises is higher, and we are no longer able to share some utilities.

A.4 OUTLOOK FOR THE COMING YEAR

The highest priorities for the coming year will be addressing office resource issues, completing all aspects of the Australian Capital Region 2004 SoE Report, establishing the structure of the ACT 2007 SoE Report and reviewing arrangements for regional SoE reporting.

Under-resourcing, exacerbated by increased running costs, remains a key issue. It limits my ability to carry out all the functions of my office, and results in multiple inefficiencies by having to continually appoint fixed-term staff for labour-intensive activities like SoE reporting. I will continue to seek more appropriate resources from the ACT Government in relation to our statutory functions for the ACT and raise this matter with the Regional Leaders Forum as part of a review of arrangements for regional SoE reporting.

The Australian Capital Region 2004 SoE Report will be the highest priority and most intensive activity for the first two quarters of the year. The report will continue to be progressively published on the office website at <http://www.envcomm.act.gov.au>.

As part of the process of establishing the structure of the 2007 SoE Report for the ACT I intend to liaise at length, and have held preliminary discussions, with other agencies now involved in reporting Government's progress on implementation of the Canberra Plan and on measuring Government's progress towards sustainability. Resources will not be available for an intensive investigation of relevant matters. At this stage, both the ACT 2007 SoE Report and the Government's second report on measuring progress towards sustainability are planned for release at approximately the same time. I will be working with the Office of Sustainability towards ensuring coordination between the two reporting processes in an attempt to avoid duplication of reporting and confusion.

Because of the difficulties experienced this year in preparing the Regional SoE Report, and changes resulting from NSW Government reforms that are relevant to the SoE process, I will review the basis for the role of this office in regional reporting and the requirements (including resources) for it, for resolution through the Regional Leaders' Forum. To commence this, I propose a workshop with the member councils of the Australian Capital Region in late 2005. A review of the reporting requirements for NSW Local Governments would also be relevant.

PART B: AGENCY PERFORMANCE

B.1 KEY STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS

This section addresses key performance measures of the office: SoE reports, and investigation activities during the year.

Section 14(8) of the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* also requires reporting of complaints received that did not proceed to a full investigation, and the reasons for their not doing so.

This section of the report complies with section 14(8) and also with the ‘special annual reporting requirements’ of section 20 of the Commissioner for the Environment Act. It notes any significant impacts on the environment during the year plus progress on implementation of recommendations from SoE reports. There were no recommendations from investigations that were either directed by the Minister or initiated by the Commissioner on which to report implementation progress.

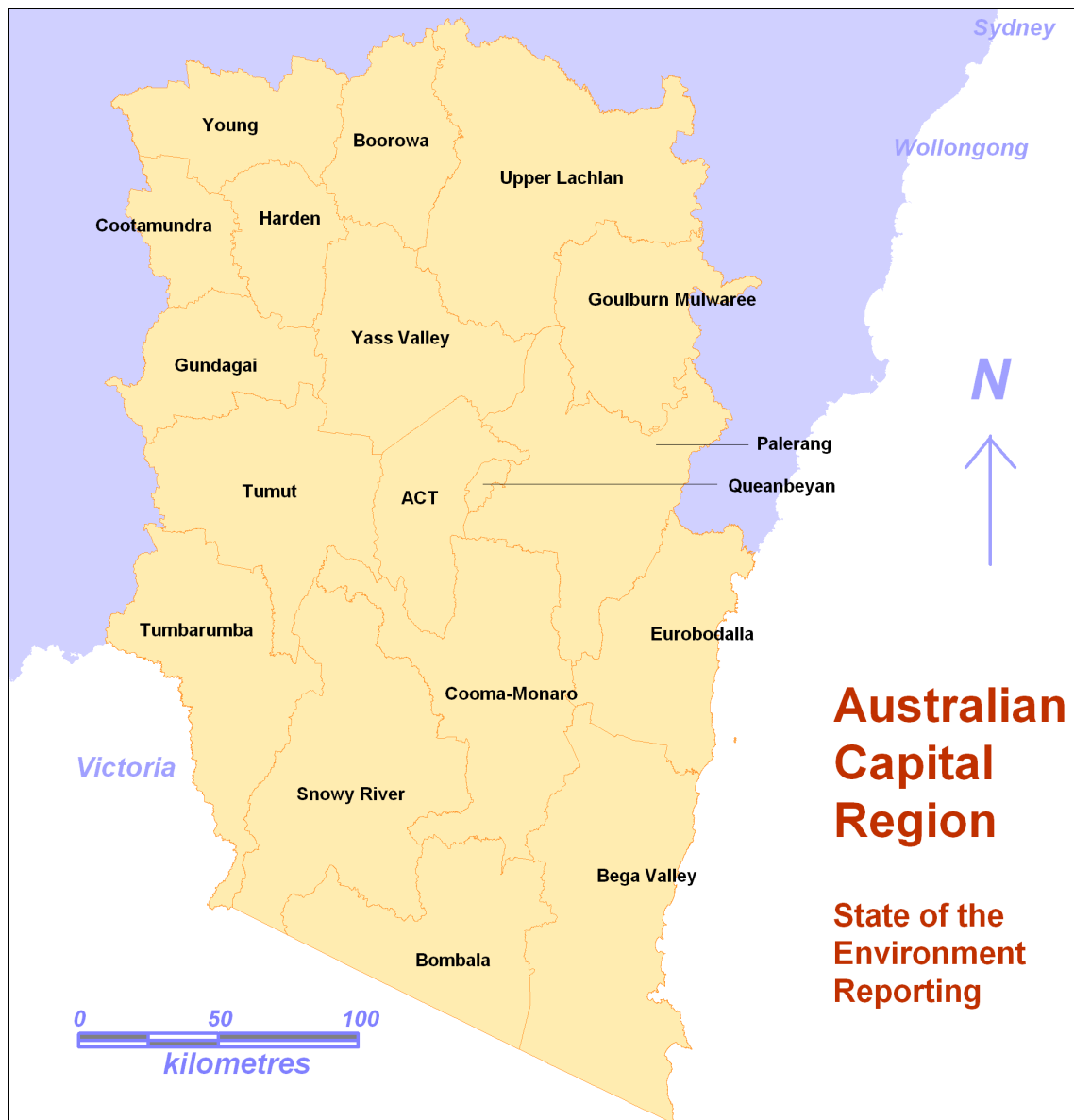
Key result area—State of the Environment reporting

Since activity started for the Australian Capital Region 2004 SoE Report, three more councils from the western side of the region—Cootamundra, Gundagai and Tumbarumba—joined the Regional Leaders’ Forum.

The NSW Government Boundaries Commission revised council boundaries in February 2004. This affected almost half the councils in the Region—Queanbeyan and Goulburn City Councils and Cooma-Monaro, Yarrowlunla, Tallaganda, Mulwaree, Gunning, Yass, Crookwell and Tumut Shire Councils. The new council boundaries are shown in Figure 1.

These changes had significant implications for mapping and reporting resources that had previously been invested in SoE reporting for the Region, and for continuity of reporting against indicators between the 2000 and 2004 SoE reports.

By the end of the financial year, the office had completed the structure for web publication of the 17 individual SoE reports and the regional synthesis, and had commenced publication of completed indicators. For most councils, write-ups had been finalised or were close to completion for nine of the 20 mandatory indicators and drafts for checking by the councils were ready for another four mandatory indicators. Some work had commenced on most of the remaining mandatory indicators and for some of the other indicators that are not required under NSW law but had been requested by the councils.

Figure 1: The Australian Capital Region for SoE reporting

Key result area—Investigations

s12(1)(a) (Investigations arising from complaints)

No new investigations were commenced during the year. Increasingly, however, my office is acting as facilitator for inquirers and people who ring with complaints about management of the environment. Most of the inquirers are referred directly to the appropriate agency for action. In some cases, the caller has already received some assistance from the relevant agency but resolution has not occurred. In those cases, the caller generally knows the number to contact, but has looked for an impartial body. My office has adopted a greater facilitation role, without the need to proceed to full investigation of a problem, to help such people reach resolution.

Activities in relation to investigations and inquiries during the year are shown in Table 1. While the number is negligible compared with those received by the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner, I have included inquiries along with formal complaints because the inquiries also indicate a level of community

dissatisfaction with environmental management in the ACT. We have no way of knowing whether the low total number of complaints received by my office is because most people are generally happy with how Government is managing the environment, or whether they simply do not know of the existence in the ACT of a Commissioner for the Environment.

Table 1: Complaints and inquiries received by the Commissioner

Formal complaints	
Formal complaints on hand at 1 July 2004	5
Decision not to investigate	5
Formal complaints received in 2004–05	2
Decision to investigate pending as at 30 June 2005	2
Inquiries and potential complaints received in 2004–05	49
Inquirer directed to appropriate contact	42
Action facilitated by OCE	7
Matter resolved	6
Resolution still pending	1

Complaints on hand at 1 July 2004—Gungahlin Drive Extension

Five formal complaints had been received about the proposed extension to Gungahlin Drive on the eve of Dr Joe Baker's retirement as Commissioner on 31 March 2004. I commenced as Commissioner on 10 June after a hiatus where there was no-one in the office with authority for progressing this matter. I ultimately decided not to proceed with a full investigation because between March and July the matter had moved into the legal realm.

Formal complaints

Management of noise from motorsport at Fairbairn Park

April 2005—This complaint arose from an analysis of motorsports clubs' compliance with management plans, using data supplied under a Freedom of Information application. I had several discussions with the Environment Protection Authority on this matter during May and June. As at 30 June 2005 I was awaiting a formal response to the analysis and was of the view that the matter may yet be settled without proceeding to a full investigation.

Impact of proposed development of Forde on wetlands

June 2005—There are three interrelated aspects of this complaint that potentially warrant investigation with respect to the ACT Planning and Land Authority: i) the processes followed in handling the objections submitted by the complainant, ii) the environmental values assigned to the wetland area and the extent to which they were considered in the finalisation of Draft Variation 130, and iii) whether any measures are being taken during the detailed design for the suburb of Forde to protect the wetland area.

Action facilitated by OCE

Matters raised here by community members related to urban construction, proposed urban development, fire hazard reduction, alleged dumping on government land and a proposed direct grant of a lease. My office facilitated action with appropriate officers in Environment ACT, the ACT Planning and Land Authority, and the Land Development Agency.

s12(1)(b) (Minister-directed investigations)

There were no directions from the Minister for the Environment during 2004–05 to conduct an investigation. There were no such investigations pending completion at the commencement of the reporting year.

s12(1)(c) (Commissioner-initiated investigations)

The Commissioner commenced no new investigations under this paragraph of the enabling legislation during the year. There were no such investigations pending completion at the commencement of the reporting year.

Special annual reporting requirements

Section 20 of the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* reads:

A report presented, or information provided, by the Commissioner under section 8 of the Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 1995 in respect of a period shall include particulars of:

- (a) any special factor which the Commissioner believes had a significant impact on the environment during the period;*
- (b) any measures taken during the period by or on behalf of the Territory in relation to the implementation of any recommendation in a State of the Environment Report under section 19 or a special report under section 21; and*
- (c) any recommendation in such a report which the Commissioner believes is still to be implemented or fully implemented.*

Only recommendations from SoE reports are addressed in this annual report. All recommendations from previous ‘special reports’ under the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* have been dealt with in previous annual reports.

Significant impacts on the environment

Drought conditions continued to affect the ACT’s environment during 2004–05, despite above-average rain in August, November, December, February and June. Good rains in spring during 2004 followed the driest February–July period on record. Water restrictions at level 2 or 3 were in place for Canberra for the whole year. As noted in the next section under Recommendation 2003.6, vegetation damaged by the 2003 bushfires in the Upper Cotter and in the alpine bogs has shown good regeneration. However, parts of the fire-damaged Lower Cotter have continued to suffer severe erosion, particularly after heavy rains.

Progress on implementation of recommendations from SoE reports

At the time of my last annual report the Government’s response to recommendations from the 2003 SoE report had not been tabled. The endorsed Government responses are therefore reported here in full, along with implementation actions to 30 June 2005, as reported by relevant ACT Government agencies.

I have also sought implementation updates on five recommendations from the 2000 SoE report and one from the 1997 report that I was not satisfied had been fully implemented at the time of my last annual report. The interested reader can trace earlier comments on implementation of SoE recommendations in previous Commissioner for the Environment annual reports, available in hard copy through the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment, or through the website at <http://www.envcomm.act.gov.au>.

My comments on implementation progress are summarised in Table 2 and appear in full in the subsequent text.

A number of recommendations from previous reports suggest ongoing implementation. Rather than seeking annual Government updates of action for those topics, I intend to incorporate such information into indicator results for the ACT 2007 SoE Report, with the aim of demonstrating where Government actions have led to improved environmental quality.

Table 2: Summary of progress on implementation of recommendations from 2003, 2000 and 1997 SoE reports

Recommendation	Summary of Topic	Summary of Progress on Implementation
2003.1	Use of mobile air quality monitoring instruments for airborne particles and other pollutants	Mostly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report and in SoE2007
2003.2	Examine how indoor air quality may be monitored	Mostly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report
2003.3	Incentives for low-emission vehicles for government agencies	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—no further follow-up required
2003.4	Long-term research and monitoring for at least 30 years for post-fire recovery of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.5	Seek funding for 2003.4 from Commonwealth through the National Research Priority for an environmentally sustainable Australia	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—no further follow-up required
2003.6	Implement post-fire works and management program	Mostly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report
2003.7	Effectiveness of pest plant control programs for control, biodiversity conservation and catchment management	Limited progress—to be followed up in my next annual report and for possible follow-up in SoE2007
2003.8	Catchment-by-catchment hydrological study of groundwater systems for quality and quantity	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.9	Include extreme event scenarios in policy and management plans	Partly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report
2003.10	Adopt recommendations from ACT Greenhouse Strategy 2002 Review	I will ask for an update on new policy directions for my next annual report and will report on greenhouse in SoE2007
2003.11	Reliable system for long-term uninterrupted weather monitoring for ACT's water supply	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.12	Access to appropriate affordable housing for lower income groups	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.13	Programs to reduce gaps in health outcomes for Aboriginal people	Mostly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report and in SoE2007
2003.14	Services and facilities to keep pace with increasing demands of ageing population	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.15	Increase professional development and employment opportunities for young and disadvantaged	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.16	Access to support services and dedicated acute care and accommodation for mentally ill children and adolescents	Partly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report
2003.17	Implement Sustainable Transport Plan 'principles for managing change' to assist sustainable transport outcomes	Partly implemented—to be followed up in my next annual report

Recommendation	Summary of Topic	Summary of Progress on Implementation
2003.18	Develop data records for Community Participation and Heritage that meet needs for reporting purposes	Implementation progressing—to be followed up in my next annual report
2003.19	Ensure biodiversity conservation is integral to planning and management of landuse change and a range of fire recovery and prevention programs	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—for possible follow-up in SoE2007
2003.20	Appropriately resource priority tasks in <i>Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy</i>	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005— to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.21	Stimulate and reward innovations to minimise resource use in specific major plans and strategies	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.22	Agencies to include in their annual reports the effectiveness of innovations implemented under 2003.21	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—no further follow-up required
2003.23	Adopt water use and efficiency initiatives that yield greatest environmental, social and economic benefits	Ongoing implementation, but no further annual report update required—to be followed up in SoE2007
2003.24	Apply revenue from water abstraction charge directly to catchment management and water efficiency programs	No further action required
2003.25	Sufficiently fund asset management and infrastructure and ensure new infrastructure supports sustainable resource use	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—for possible follow-up in SoE2007
2000.17	Review ACT water quality standards	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—no further follow-up required
2000.18	Procedures for builder compliance with sedimentation controls	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005—outcomes to be followed up in SoE2007
2000.20	Baseline data for dioxin levels at Totalcare, Mitchell	No further action required
2000.21	Spatial reporting of current fire regime against historical conditions	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005— to be followed up in SoE2007
2000.25	Improve methods of measuring surface water quality	Ongoing, but no further annual report update required—see water quality in SoE2007
1997.12	Improve coordination and support for community monitoring	Considered implemented as at 30 June 2005

Codes for assessment of Government progress in Table 2

Government progress in implementing each SoE recommendation has been rated according the following descriptors:

Implemented: actions carried out have met the intent of the recommendation

Mostly implemented: most actions have been taken, but some remaining actions flagged for undertaking have not yet commenced, and/or the effectiveness of actions in meeting the intent of the recommendation warrants assessment

Partly implemented: some actions taken but quite a few others still to be completed (e.g. draft reports not yet finalised), and/or activities government has flagged are in their early stages

Implementation progressing: relevant actions being taken to meet the intent of the recommendation but these actions are ongoing and some actions warrant further assessment of progress

Limited progress: actions reported by Government address a limited part of the intent of the recommendation

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required: appropriate policies/programs are in place, but the timeframes for measuring their effectiveness in meeting the intent of the recommendation are beyond the annual reporting timeframe; these policies/programs will be assessed in the 2007 ACT SoE report.

ACT 2003 SoE Report

Although all ‘clusters’ of recommendations in the 2003 SoE Report were prefaced “In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment ...”, most agencies have proceeded without any contact with my office. In the process of preparing this annual report it has become clear to me that one outcome of this lack of contact has been that agencies have not always understood the intent of some SoE recommendations. My assessment of their progress in this annual report thus sometimes differs from their own assessment. During the coming year I will endeavour to establish a closer working relationship with those agencies from which I will seek updates for my next annual report or which may need to provide data for the 2007 ACT SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.1

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should use mobile air quality monitoring to measure and record air quality at busy intersections, near known point sources, and in other parts of Canberra that may be susceptible to high levels of airborne particles and other pollutants

Endorsed Government response

AGREE—The ACT Government currently operates two major air quality monitoring stations, which have recently been upgraded to measure particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5). An additional \$50,000 has been set aside in 2004–05 to purchase additional monitoring equipment. It is envisaged that this equipment will be periodically relocated to give a more detailed understanding of particulate pollution across Canberra taking account of busy intersections, known point sources and areas that may be susceptible to high levels of airborne particles and other pollutants. Mobile air quality monitoring equipment would require substantial additional investment.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The ACT Government has purchased three instruments for measuring fine particles. It is anticipated that these instruments will be operational by the end of winter 2005. It is envisaged that they will be periodically relocated to give a more detailed understanding of particulate pollution across Canberra.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner’s comments

Mostly implemented. Air quality in Canberra is considered to be generally good, but particulates from both wood-burning fires and from motor vehicle emissions remain a niggling concern. The intention behind this recommendation was to extend air quality monitoring beyond the official station at Monash for measuring in accordance with the National Environment Protection Measure for ambient air quality and the monitoring station in Civic.

While the new equipment for measuring fine particles has been purchased, it is not yet operational. Use of the instruments in a variety of locations to measure particulates will fully meet the intent of the recommendation.

In my annual report for 2005–06, I will follow up on how the instruments were deployed during that year. I will request data on findings from these three instruments for reporting in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.2

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should examine how indoor air quality may be monitored in the ACT

Endorsed Government response

AGREE—ACT Health undertakes routine monitoring of air pollutants in the ambient environment. Indoor air quality is monitored on a case-by-case basis if a specific issue is identified in the ACT, as in all jurisdictions in Australia. For example, the ACT Health Protection Service recently undertook an examination of indoor air with special reference to environmental tobacco smoke. Indoor air quality is not routinely monitored in Australia.

The Environmental Health Council (enHealth) has established a working party to examine indoor air quality issues on a national basis. Recommendations from this working party are expected in 2004–05. The ACT is represented on this Council, and is participating in its deliberations on indoor air quality.

Government action to 30 June 2005

ACT Health continues to undertake routine monitoring of air pollutants in the ambient environment. Indoor air quality is monitored on a case-by-case basis if a specific issue is identified in the ACT.

The enHealth Council is still considering issues in relation to indoor air quality monitoring.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Mostly implemented. The ACT Government has addressed this recommendation in probably the most resourceful way, through the national body. However, the matter of indoor air quality monitoring remains essentially unresolved. I will seek follow-up information on this recommendation again in my 2005–06 annual report to see if enHealth Council has made any recommendations by that time.

Recommendation 2003.3

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should promote and provide incentives for the use of low-emission vehicles by Government agencies

Endorsed Government response

AGREE—The Government is in the process of leasing a fleet of 25 hybrid low emission vehicles on a trial basis for evaluation. While there are supply difficulties, the ACT Government already has proportionately more hybrid vehicles in its passenger fleet than any other state or territory government or the Commonwealth.

The Government has entered into an initial one-year agreement with *Greenfleet* to offset vehicle carbon dioxide emissions for its entire passenger fleet by planting approximately 20,000 extra trees.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The policy governing the ACT's passenger and light commercial vehicle fleet, the *ACTPS Non-Executive Passenger and Light Commercial Vehicle Management Policy*, promotes and provides incentives for leasing of more fuel-efficient and low-emission vehicles. Under the policy a surcharge is

collected on the lease of all medium and large vehicles (1.8 litre capacity and over) and a rebate provided on all small vehicles (under 1.8 litres).

The ACT Government is a major operator of motor vehicles in the ACT with 1283 passenger and light vehicles in its fleet. As part of its October 2004 election platform, the Government committed that 10% of the ACT vehicle fleet would comprise fuel-efficient, low-emission vehicles by 2008. One initiative in place to move towards this goal is the leasing of 26 electric petrol hybrid vehicles. Work on determining a threshold for fuel-efficient and low-emission vehicles will be progressed to inform other possible measures/initiatives required to reach this goal. The Government has re-subscribed to *Greenfleet* to offset the greenhouse emissions of its entire passenger vehicle fleet.

This recommendation has now been met.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Government's policy means the recommendation effectively has been met. This can be reported in the ACT 2007 SoE Report in terms of Government leadership to reduce transport emissions.

Recommendation 2003.4

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should immediately develop and resource long-term research and monitoring programs of at least 30 years' duration into post-fire recovery of terrestrial and aquatic components of natural and modified ecosystems as part of a joint program with other research providers in States affected by fire

Endorsed Government response

AGREE—The Government has developed a foundation for long-term monitoring of post-fire response and recovery of vegetation in the ACT. Field surveys have commenced in Namadgi National Park and established aquatic monitoring programs are being continued. Links with other agencies, particularly through the Australian Alps Agreement are being reinforced.

Government action to 30 June 2005

In 2004, 47 permanent plots to enable long-term vegetation monitoring were established in Namadgi National Park and the surrounding area. A subset of these sites was re-surveyed in 2005. These plots are being used to monitor post-fire recovery and long-term change in vegetation composition and structure. The data are being collated to form the ACT fire response database detailing the recovery mechanisms and timing for plant species. In 2005 some sites were surveyed for small mammals to address changes in both flora and fauna.

Resources to support monitoring of the permanent plots are subject to the normal budget process.

Environment ACT is working with the Emergency Services Authority, which is the ACT's partner in the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), to identify joint research projects, including development of an on-line information database. When appropriate we anticipate contributing to this initiative, which could address our interest in such a database (see also the response to Recommendation 2003.5). The Bushfire CRC has been collating some of the relevant fire information and progress in this area and its relevance to the ACT is being considered. The Bushfire CRC Research Program B specifically addresses the need for long-term monitoring sites and the coordination of the

results of this research. The Emergency Services Authority is actively involved in the Bushfire CRC Research Program B to ensure that the work undertaken in the ACT is part of this program.

A fuel hazard assessment program was established in Namadgi National Park and all the vegetation plots were assessed for fuel hazard. These, and the aquatic monitoring program, will continue and be used to provide input into future management and planning.

Links with other States is continuing through the Australian Alps agreement. All the Australian Alps vegetation plots were resurveyed in 2005. Staff attended and presented results at the Alps Fire Recovery Biodiversity workshop held in June 2005 and the pig management workshop in May 2005. A copy of the report from this workshop will be forwarded to the Commissioner's office when it becomes available.

Results of this research and other relevant research in other jurisdictions have been the basis for the development of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan objectives for fuel management zones in the ACT.

Given the long-term nature of this work, it is considered that this matter is now concluded. Results from the survey work can be provided for future State of the Environment reports.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. The intention of this recommendation has been met. Coordination with relevant interstate agencies affected by bushfire and the long-term monitoring of recovery are both critical to understanding of biodiversity and future fire and catchment management.

In my annual report for 2003–04, I indicated that I would also follow up Recommendation 2000.5—which sought verification of native vegetation communities in the ACT—through actions taken against Recommendation 2003.4. This was because an agreed classification of ecological communities for the entire ACT is also critical for understanding fire impacts and recovery. Agreement between ACT and NSW agencies about those communities is also important for regional reporting purposes.

The ACT 2003 SoE Report reported that a new classification of ecological communities for the ACT and surrounding areas had been agreed. In my last annual report I noted that the classification was still in draft form at the end of that financial year. I believe that finalisation is now imminent, and that the draft classification has been able to be used in the interim.

Once this classification is agreed, the mapped intensity data for the 2003 bushfires, and earlier mapped burn data, can be analysed in terms of those ecological communities, to better understand the impacts of historical and recent fires on vegetation in the ACT and help determine appropriate fire management regimes in the future. (See also comments under Recommendation 2000.21 in this annual report.)

Agreed classifications will also enable understanding of how much of those communities remain in comparison with estimated coverage before European settlement, and their level of current protection. Such information is needed to identify if any other ecological communities in the ACT should be declared threatened.

I will seek information on all these aspects of ecological communities for reporting in the ACT 2007 SoE Report, or before, depending on the resources of my office to do so.

Recommendation 2003.5

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should seek funding for the long-term research in recommendation 2003.4 from the Commonwealth Government on the basis of the National Research Priority ‘an environmentally sustainable Australia’, announced in December 2002

Endorsed Government response

AGREED. The Minister for the Environment wrote in December 2003 to the Commonwealth Minister proposing a national on-line information base to assist in the overall fire research effort. The Commissioner’s recommendation will be taken up in subsequent discussions with the Commonwealth.

Natural Heritage Trust funds were secured in July 2003 for post-fire audit and monitoring.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The Minister for the Environment wrote in December 2003 to the Commonwealth Minister proposing a national on-line information base to assist in the overall fire research effort. The Commonwealth Minister responded in March 2004 agreeing with the proposal but wishing to wait until the delivery of the Council of Australian Government’s Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management. This report was released in January 2005.

Funding from the nominated source has not been accessed, but discussions with the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre on joint projects are being pursued (see also response to Recommendation 2003.4).

Commissioner’s comments

Implemented. The ACT Government has made appropriate approaches and alternative sources and actions are being explored.

Recommendation 2003.6

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should implement an appropriate post-fire works and management program to protect water supply catchment, aquatic habitat and nature conservation values of the upper Cotter River, Murrumbidgee and Molonglo River valleys, and their tributaries

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—Expert advice is being provided on the most appropriate post-fire works and management program to protect water supply catchments. Advice received thus far has emphasised that it will be a long-term recovery process. Significant works have been undertaken in the water supply catchments. These works include rehabilitation of roads, tracks and stream banks, removal of sediment slugs and stabilization of undercut bank areas, rehabilitation of sphagnum bogs and replacement of damaged monitoring infrastructure. Monitoring of the aquatic environment has increased with cooperative research measuring sediment loads and sediment movement, and fish and macro-invertebrate occurrence.

Research workshops have been undertaken to enable researchers in the post-bushfire catchment to interact and access other work.

Works undertaken outside the water supply catchments include road, track and stream bank stabilization and revegetation.

The Government has undertaken aerial seeding in some of the burnt areas previously under production forestry management to stabilise soil and reduce erosion. A water quality monitoring program is being developed with the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology.

Strategic planning by Government land management agencies has resulted in a significant fraction of roads being identified to be removed to reduce potential sediment loads. Riparian zones within forestry land have also been reviewed and increased relative to landform.

Substantial revegetation programs are underway in collaboration with Greening Australia and other community groups.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The main areas of post-fire works were drainage improvement on roads and tracks, revegetation and alpine bog rehabilitation.

The roads and tracks maintained in the main catchments were a particular focus of work. A program to improve drainage and thereby reduce sediment loads in waterways was in its second of three years. Table drains, culverts and stream crossings are being improved and roll-over water diversion structures are being constructed. The works are guided by expert external advice.

The upper Cotter River vegetation has regenerated and regrown well since the fires and no supplementary revegetation was undertaken there. In other areas, large numbers of riverine casuarinas have been a casualty of the fires and drought, with some finally succumbing during the 2004–05 summer. A riverine vegetation replacement program has been put in place. Elsewhere, revegetation has been limited by the on-going drought, although some large-scale community planting events have proved successful. Native grass seedlings have been successfully established after even light showers.

Alpine bog restoration is an on-going program. Sites identified for restoration are located in the Cotter Catchment and Ginini Flats Wetlands. The project aims to retain and pond water in the bog systems by constructing barriers from naturally found materials and straw bales and to protect living Sphagnum from the effects of ultraviolet exposure by shading it from the sun using shade cloth and straw mulch.

Despite the ongoing drought, there is evidence of good recovery in bogs where restoration has been undertaken. Treated sites are now much wetter, stream incision has been halted, flow is much slower, and there is more ponding of water.

Baseline studies in the bushfire-affected catchment areas have been established to examine the effects of buffers on the rehabilitation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Notwithstanding progress made in parts of the fire-affected areas, soil erosion remains a problem, particularly in the lower Cotter catchment. Heavy rainfall continues to cause movement of soil and sediment into the Cotter River and reservoir.

The Government's June 2005 decision to bring ACT Forests and Environment ACT together in one organisation will allow a greater focus on water catchment issues as all of the ACT's water supply catchment areas will be under a single management group. One of the primary benefits of the new

arrangements is the integration of land management in the Cotter Catchment and this will facilitate the delivery of better catchment, conservation and land management outcomes.

Commissioner's comments

Mostly implemented. The works and recovery in the Upper Cotter and in the bogs are very encouraging despite continuing drought. Because of the importance of these areas, I will seek follow-up for my next annual report (for 2005–06) on the effectiveness of landuse practices and integration of land management in curbing the erosion, particularly in the Lower Cotter.

Recommendation 2003.7

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should assess the contributions of existing ACT Government pest plant control programs to achieving pest plant control, biodiversity conservation, and catchment management objectives and, if appropriate, trial alternative programs

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The ACT Weeds Strategy outlines principles for determining priority weed control programs. The Government reports annually on implementation progress. A Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy being prepared to support delivery of the ACT Natural Resource Management Plan will provide a framework for assessing weed control program outcomes against natural resource management objectives.

Specific management plans have been developed for declared pest plant species and include targets for control over the next five years. Annual weed programs aim to ensure progress is made against these targets.

The Government will discuss with the Commissioner the establishment of a long term study to further examine the contribution of pest plant control programs to achieving biodiversity conservation and catchment management objectives.

Government action to 30 June 2005

As identified in the ACT Weeds Strategy, a long-term approach is necessary for success in controlling weed species. In regard to many weed species, the priorities should not fluctuate markedly from year to year if progress is to be made. A flow-on of priorities from previous years should therefore be expected, with some new items reflecting changing community priorities or new information.

Environment ACT has worked proactively with retail nursery outlets in the promotion of the Bush Friendly Scheme. This initiative has resulted in nurseries promoting bush friendly plant species and not stocking invasive species that have the potential to invade bushland.

Environment ACT has also worked very closely with the rural community in the ACT in providing an extension and advisory role on weed control and sustainable land management matters.

- *Non-chemical approaches*

- Although herbicides form an important method of control of weed species, the Weed Control Program's aim is for an integrated approach of replacing weed species with useful competitive species.
- Continuation of sustainable grazing program in riparian zones in rural areas. This is part of the implementation of the African Lovegrass Strategy.
- Monitoring of the Crown Weevil (*Mogulons larvatus*) a biological control agent for Paterson's Curse released in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and Isaacs Ridge. The crown weevil has established, but has not reproduced sufficiently to produce noticeable reduction in weed density. The ACT Parks and Conservation Service released another biological agent, the Flea Beetle (*Longitarsus echii*) on a total of six sites in early spring 2004.
- Monitoring of the Weevil (*Larinus latus*) and the Stem Boring Weevil (*Lixus cardui*) at Googong, both biological control agents for Scotch Thistle. The weevils have established, but have not reproduced sufficiently to produce noticeable reduction in weed density.
- Continuing cooperative research effort between CSIRO Entomology and Environment ACT into the biological control of Onopordum thistle with monitoring of the trial site established at Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- Mechanical and physical removal of pine wildings, African boxthorn and larger woody weeds.
- Mechanical control of Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) was undertaken at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve by a vegetation management contractor using a heavy mulcher powered by a high powered four-wheel drive tractor. Additional mechanical control was undertaken by staff using chainsaws.

- *Sites of conservation significance*

- Particular weed species are individually targeted in sites where they impact threatened species, endangered ecological communities or other species of concern.
- Weed control was undertaken in sites of conservation significance. In some areas within ACT Forests and Environment ACT no control work was undertaken where the sites and species were affected by the continuing drought conditions.
- The control program is designed to manage problem weed species while protecting the values of sites of conservation significance. The weed control activities undertaken ensure a low concentration of key weed species in areas of high conservation value. However, continued effort will be required to maintain the results, particularly given the ongoing drought conditions.

- *Education and awareness programs*

The principal educative and awareness activity for this year was the reprinting and distribution of a pamphlet that identifies weeds of horticultural origin in the ACT. Local nurseries were visited by the Conservation Council Weeds Officer (supported by ACT Government).

Other important activities included:

- Weedbuster Week held in October 2004. This program is held to promote weeds awareness in the local community. Weedbuster activities that were particularly successful were the weeds display at Floriade, the Weed Swap at west Belconnen and Mugga Landfills and a display at the Lanyon Garden Open Day
- distribution of the weeds pamphlet
- distribution of aquatic weed information to all nurseries, aquarium suppliers and other garden retail outlets
- distribution of the weeds pamphlet extended to include all schools, garden centres and shopfronts in the ACT.

On 5 May 2005 the Legislative Assembly passed the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005*. The purpose of the Act is to protect the ACT's land and aquatic resources from threats from pest plants and pest animals, and to promote a strategic approach to pest management. The Act provides enhanced mechanisms for the management of weeds including prohibiting the propagation and supply of certain declared pest plants.

- *Monitoring and evaluation*

Currently there are mapping, monitoring and eradication programs in place by ACT government agencies to address those weed species for which eradication is both desirable and practicable. These species are Broom, Gorse, Alligator Weed and Spotted Knapweed. The one known Knapweed site had been monitored for the past four years following detection and eradication of the plants. No reinfestation has been found.

The Broom, Gorse and Alligator Weed infestation sites are mapped and addressed on an annual basis by 'seek and destroy' action. Apart from Alligator Weed, these species are at manageable levels, at known sites and with information readily accessible.

The Alligator Weed infestations in public areas are in lakes. The weed is more mobile than the land-based species and more difficult to locate, and therefore to control. ACT Government agencies are working with other states in the development of a nationally funded program with an education and awareness focus on the detection and management of backyard infestations of Alligator Weed.

- *Mapping*

The majority of the ACT's environmental and agricultural weeds are widespread. There is no recognised standard for mapping these weeds and the ACT does not have the resources to develop a standard. While some use of GPS methods have been used for weed mapping, it has been found that in most cases it is easier and much quicker for field-based staff and contractors undertaking broad-scale weed control to mark areas of control on a paper map at 1:10,000. This information is then documented on a digital map database.

The Department of Defence is currently using a newly developed weed mapping GPS/GIS field system. It has been found that this data collection process is labour intensive and does add some cost to control programs. ACT Government land management agencies, *via* the Weeds Working Group, are monitoring the progress of this program and will consider the costs and benefits of investing in this type of system when the Defence program is more advanced.

Commissioner's comments

Limited progress. Many weed management activities have been carried out in the Territory, and existing mapping and monitoring shows that specific types of weeds have been maintained at manageable levels or have been eradicated. However it appears that to date little has been done to assess the biodiversity conservation benefits resulting from weed management activities or the extent to which these activities have enhanced catchment management objectives. I have raised these matters with the Executive Director of Environment ACT, and will report on this recommendation again in my next annual report for 2005–06. It is an aspect of weed management that I will also consider for inclusion in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.8

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should undertake a catchment-by-catchment hydrological study of groundwater systems to assess water quality and quantity and its connectivity, spatial distribution and temporal variability

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—Environment ACT has commissioned groundwater studies on nine individual subcatchments. Further studies will be undertaken within other subcatchments as required.

Government action to 30 June 2005

Desktop studies on the initial nine subcatchments have been completed and have provided Environment ACT with a more robust picture of the groundwater resources in these subcatchments. In the four subcatchments in which demand for groundwater is strongest Environment ACT will conduct field validation of the desktop results to ensure that our resource data is as comprehensive as it could be.

Field validation will involve sinking three pairs of bores in each of the four subcatchments. Each pair of bores will comprise a pumped bore and a monitored bore. The three pairs of bores in each subcatchment will be spatially located to account for differences in groundwater condition that may arise through geological or topographic variation. Monitoring will need to continue for at least three years to provide a comprehensive validation.

In addition, work is being conducted to clarify the relationship between groundwater resources, abstraction and ecological condition in streams. Because of the nature of the aquifers in the ACT, groundwater is recharged by rainfall and all eventually discharges into streams. Groundwater stream discharge is important for maintaining the low flow component in streams. Further work will identify the effect of groundwater abstraction on low flow in streams, and the consequences of such changes on the ecological condition of streams.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Implementation of this recommendation has been facilitated by the ACT Government's major review of the ACT's water resource and use through *Think water, act water* as well as through increases in demand for access to groundwater, particularly in the urban subcatchments and since water restrictions were introduced. There is much better focus now on the groundwater resource and its relationship to the total resource than there was when state of the environment reporting for the ACT commenced in 1993–94, and particularly since enactment of the *Water Resources Act 1998*.

The Government's focus is strategically on those catchments that it considers to be close to fully allocated. The additional work to clarify the relationship between groundwater resources, abstraction and ecological condition in streams is consistent with the intent of the recommendation. I will include findings from all aspects reported here in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.9

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should extend existing policy and management plans to include extreme event scenarios

Endorsed Government Response

AGREED—In the light of recent fire and drought events in particular, the Government is paying particular attention to accommodating the implications of these events in policy and management planning. This includes active collaboration at a national level.

Government action to 30 June 2005:

The establishment and development of the Emergency Services Authority in July 2004 has provided the institutional architecture for the ACT to develop broad-ranging planning tools, all of which take into account extreme scenarios. For instance, the ACT's Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) was completed in late 2003. The ACT Emergency Plan is under review and will be re-issued in late 2005, incorporating best practice in planning and coordination of emergency management. As well, Sub-Plans for Flood and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards are under development. Following the completion of the community evacuation and safety policy in late 2005, guidelines for evacuation, using an all-hazards evacuation and safety warning system are nearing completion. In all of this work Australian Federal Police ACT Policing have been a close collaborating partner.

Beyond the Emergency Services Authority, other key members of the Emergency Management Committee have worked to complete other key tools. The ACT Recovery Coordinator (in the Department of Housing and Community Services) has steered the ACT Recovery Sub-Committee to completion of the updated ACT Recovery Sub-Plan (December 2003). Under the leadership of ACT Health, the Health Emergency Management Sub-Plan is now complete. Environment ACT is also working closely with key stakeholders to complete an update of the Animal Health Emergencies Sub-Plan. Equally, the Public information Sub-Plan is nearing completion.

Emergency risk management approaches continue to take into account the full range of possibilities, including extreme scenarios, in calculating risk to the ACT from all hazards.

Commissioner's comments

Partly implemented. This recommendation has behind it protection of biodiversity as well as protection of current and future generations of our community. The ACT Government has responded efficiently with regard to incorporating extreme event scenarios in a range of planning.

Because of its relevance to the ACT's biodiversity and ecosystems and other recommendations from the ACT 2003 SoE Report relating to fires, I undertook close scrutiny of Version 1 of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan prior to its completion in late 2003. I have not viewed any of the other plans or sub-plans referred to above. As many of the latter are still being developed, I will ask for follow-up

information about the completion of these plans and their provision for extreme events for my annual report for 2005–06.

Recommendation 2003.10

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should adopt the six recommendations in the ACT Greenhouse Strategy: 2002 Review of performance and options for the future, released in March 2003

Endorsed Government response

DISAGREE—On the 23 June 2004, Ms Tucker MLA and representative of the ACT Greens political party moved the following motion in the ACT Legislative Assembly:

That this Assembly calls on the Government to:

- (1) Reaffirm the Territory's commitment to meeting the Greenhouse Gas Reduction target of reducing net greenhouse emissions to 1990 levels by 2008, and reducing them by 20% by 2018; and to this end;
- (2) Commit to:
 - (a) introduce Greenhouse Benchmarks as a Retail Licence Condition for electricity retailers, in line with NSW;
 - (b) introduce a no-interest, low-interest or CPI-interest only loan scheme to facilitate house owners increasing the energy efficiency of their properties, and installing solar water heating, with particular attention to landlords;
 - (c) introduce an energy efficiency and water use rating system for commercial buildings, drawing on the best available Australian models;
 - (d) develop a program to retrofit current public housing to four star energy ratings in the short term, aiming for five stars in the medium term;
 - (e) introduce annual targets specifically for greenhouse emissions from transport in the ACT; and
 - (f) establish an additional dedicated position within Environment ACT (or other appropriate agency) to drive implementation of government targets and timelines for government agency reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

This motion was passed, with the support of Mr Brendan Smyth MLA, Ms Vicki Dunne MLA, Mr Steve Pratt MLA, Mr Bill Stefaniak MLA, Mr Greg Cornwell MLA and Ms Jacqui Burke MLA from the ACT Liberal Party; Ms Roslyn Dundas MLA from the Australian Democrats Party; and Ms Helen Cross, an Independent member.

The Government opposed the motion.

The Government is currently considering the implications of this motion. The cost of implementation is estimated at \$114 million. The Government is also concerned that the motion has no scientific basis and was passed with no community consultation and may have no community support.

Government action to 30 June 2005

In November 2004, the energy policy functions previously with the Department of Treasury and the greenhouse policy and program functions of the Department of Urban Services were transferred to the Office of Sustainability in the Chief Minister's Department. This move reinforces the importance the Government places on addressing energy and greenhouse issues that are having a significant effect on climate change.

The Energy and Greenhouse Policy Branch within the Office of Sustainability provides policy advice on national and territory energy and greenhouse issues as well as managing greenhouse gas abatement programs under the current Greenhouse Strategy.

As required by Government, the Branch has commenced work on the development of an ACT Energy Policy and a Revised ACT Greenhouse Strategy, to address the Territory's energy access, energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission issues up to at least 2020. The development of these two initiatives will include consultations with government agencies, industry, business and the general community. Discussion papers for public comment are expected to be released during the second half of 2005. Subject to Government endorsement, the energy policy and a revised greenhouse strategy are expected to be in place later in 2006.

Programs under the current Greenhouse Strategy are continuing while a revised strategy is being developed. The Government has continued funding the Home Energy Advice Team Service and the new ACT Energy Wise program (commenced in December 2004), which combines home energy audits with a rebate to encourage householders to invest in energy efficient home improvements. Energy audits are currently being undertaken to identify energy efficiency savings for ACT government owned buildings.

The number of enquiries under the Home Energy Advisory Team Service has already exceeded expectations for the year by 20%. Similarly, home energy audits under the ACT Energy Wise Program were 10% above target for the first six months. The Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme, which saw the installation of 388 solar hot water systems over a three-year period, has been completed and is under review.

In upgrading the Government vehicle fleet, 26 petrol-electric hybrid passenger vehicles have been introduced thereby contributing to better greenhouse performance of its fleet. The Government has maintained its subscription to *Greenfleet* for the Government's passenger vehicle fleet. *Greenfleet* plants trees on behalf of subscribers to offset the greenhouse emissions of subscriber vehicle use.

The *Electricity (Greenhouse Gas Emissions) Act 2004* was passed in July 2004. This Act established the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme, which commenced on 1 January 2005. The Office of Sustainability has also continued to participate on the inter-jurisdictional greenhouse Emissions Trading Working Group. ACT together with other jurisdictions is currently reviewing a set of principles considered necessary for the development of a viable national emissions trading regime.

Commissioner's comments

As noted earlier on page 23 under the heading Endorsed Government Response, the ACT Government disagreed with this recommendation following its policy decision on the 2002 review. Nevertheless Government has continued various greenhouse-related programs consistent with its continuing intention to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I will seek an update in my 2005–06 annual report on the directions of the new greenhouse and energy policies as they relate to reducing greenhouse gas

emissions, including the development of new targets. Greenhouse emissions will also be reported in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.11

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should put in place a reliable system for long-term uninterrupted weather monitoring in the ACT's water supply catchments

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—There are currently complete weather stations located at Bendora Reservoir, Corin Reservoir and Googong Reservoir. A fourth weather station at Pierce's Creek was damaged during the January 2003 bushfires and has now been repaired. Work is currently underway to permit centralized on-line recovery of data collected by these stations.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The weather station at Pierce's Creek has now been restored and is on line. All these weather stations except Bendora are telemetered, and can be monitored from the Canberra base station. Bendora will also be telemetered when a remote power supply is established. This is anticipated in the near future (in 2005–06).

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Data from weather stations in Canberra's water catchment were provided for the first time for the 2003 SoE Report, but there were too many data gaps to be able to use them for reporting climate variability and change. I have been advised that telemetry improves the reliability of monitoring stations as breakdowns in loggers are identified and repaired faster, reducing gaps in data records. It also makes data more accessible so that trends can be assessed more quickly. Monitoring stations with back-up loggers and telemetry represent industry best practice, but at this stage back-up loggers are not being introduced. I will be keen to access data from these stations for the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.12

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should ensure lower income groups have access to appropriate affordable housing

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The need for affordable housing as part of a housing system that delivers choice to the community has been long recognised by the Government, and 'housing a future Canberra' is a key outcome area of the *Canberra Social Plan*. The Government is committed to addressing affordability issues across the broad spectrum from homelessness and the risk of homelessness at one end, through to public and community housing, private rental and home ownership. The Government is also committed to maintaining current levels of public housing, and has announced that an additional \$33.2 million will be spent on housing. Of this, \$20 million will be spent to purchase an additional 60 houses for public housing stock, \$7 million will be spent to purchase approximately 20 houses for community housing stock, giving tenants a greater choice of accommodation options, and \$3 million will be spent for

capital purposes for community housing. Significantly, \$3.2 million has been allocated for housing options, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Boarding house, to enable the Government to implement an important recommendation of Breaking the Cycle – The ACT Homelessness Strategy. The Government, through its responses to the work of the Affordable Housing Taskforce, has announced a comprehensive and wide reaching package of measures designed to address declining levels of housing affordability

The Government, through its work with the community in developing Breaking the Cycle – the ACT Homelessness Strategy, agreed to 82 actions to address the needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and committed \$13.4 million over four years, and ongoing funding in the out years, to establish a range of emergency accommodation services and supports for those most in need. New services have been funded for families with children, including single parent families headed by men, single people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and people exiting the criminal justice system.

Additional initiatives to improve housing affordability were funded in the 2004–05 budget. These initiatives include:

- \$1.6 million for emergency accommodation
- an additional \$20 million for affordable housing options
- reductions in the tax burden on private rental properties through changes to the threshold limits for land tax
- revising the eligibility criteria for stamp duty concessions
- targeting new land releases of 500 blocks over five years for first home buyers and people on low to moderate incomes

Government action to 30 June 2005

- *Community housing*

During 2004–05 the balance of the \$33.2 million provided by the 3rd Appropriation in 2003–04 for the acquisition and construction of public housing will be expended, delivering 26 properties, including 20 under the Community Organisation Rental Housing Assistance Program to house singles and families exiting crisis or transitional supported accommodation and to address homelessness.

Over 2004–05 there will be an increase of 56 dwelling units with total public housing dwelling numbers of 11,565 expected as at 30 June 2005. The properties provided under the 3rd Appropriation form part of the increase in public housing for 2004–05. In addition, the first \$5 million tranche of the \$20 million provided over four years, commencing in 2004–05 was expended resulting in 15 public housing dwelling units being provided in 2004–05.

Additional affordable housing is being provided in 2004–05 through leasing properties from private landlords and housing families exiting crisis and other supported accommodation as well as housing for five refuge families. There are currently 20 properties leased under the Social Landlord Program.

In addition, there will be an increase in community housing property numbers managed by non-government organisations by 10 to 279, including two properties for Indigenous housing owned and managed by Billabong Aboriginal Corporation, four properties for the Linc Project in

conjunction with Centacare and three properties with Havelock Housing Association and the Aids Action Council and Anglicare to house people requiring close support.

The Department provided 50 units in the 2004 tertiary year and 122 units in the 2005 tertiary year at Currong Apartments to address the shortage of accommodation for students in the ACT.

In 2005 the Department entered into an agreement with Havelock Housing Association (HHA) and the Association for Post Secondary Student Accommodation (APSSA) to tenancy manage the units. HHA manages 92 of the 122 units, 72 of which were identified as ‘affordable housing’ for Australian National University auspiced students and 20 allocated at 25% of household income to CIT students and apprentices, and APSSA manages the remaining 30 at 25% of household income.

Funding has also been allocated for:

- ten-unit facility for the Abbeyfield Society Australia Limited in partnership with Community Housing Canberra Limited
- six dwellings for Canberra Cohousing
- four dwellings for the Tamils Senior Citizens Association ACT Inc.

Negotiations are continuing with Community Housing Canberra Limited regarding the investment in the proposed joint venture on the Lyons land (the site of the former Burnie Court development) utilising the balance of the \$3 million for community housing not already committed to other projects from the 2003–04 3rd Appropriation. It is expected that these funds will be paid to Community Housing Canberra Limited by 30 June 2005.

Discussions are also proceeding with the indigenous housing sector to determine the most appropriate housing using the \$3.2m provided under the 2003–04 3rd Appropriation and identified for the provision of indigenous boarding house type accommodation. The Gungahlin Boarding House for accommodating up to 20 singles in self-contained units will be completed early in 2005–06.

- *Breaking the Cycle – The ACT Homelessness Strategy*

The implementation of Breaking the Cycle – The ACT Homelessness Strategy, is overseen by the ACT Homelessness Committee (AHC). The AHC is comprised of representatives from across ACT Government agencies and key peak community bodies including: ACT Shelter; Youth Coalition of the ACT; ACT Council Of Social Service; ACT Women’s Services; the Men’s Sector; Council of the Ageing; ACT Churches Council; and Billabong Aboriginal Corporation.

The AHC is responsible for driving the implementation, reporting and evaluation of the strategy’s 82 actions by 30 June 2007.

The AHC has established five working groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group
- Charter of Rights Working Group
- Community Awareness Working Group
- Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Sub-Committee
- Youth Homelessness Working Group.

Four working groups have been established to progress: youth homelessness; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander accommodation, support and outreach; a Charter of Rights; and the actions concerning community engagement.

A sub-committee of the AHC has also been established to develop a framework for six monthly reporting and evaluation.

The Department commissioned two research projects to scope the level of demand, gaps in services and the most effective service responses to address youth homelessness in the ACT. The Working Group has developed a draft action plan, based on the findings of both research reports; and a draft action plan for Improving Outcomes for Young Children and Young People.

- *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*

Underpinning the ACT Homelessness Strategy is the 2003–04 Budget Initiative, which provides an additional \$13.37 million to homelessness services over four years.

Services funded through this initiative include:

- crisis accommodation for six families in the Gungahlin region
- crisis accommodation for six families in the West Belconnen region
- crisis accommodation for six families in the Tuggeranong region
- medium-term accommodation for six families headed by a single male across the ACT
- crisis accommodation for six couples across the ACT
- crisis accommodation for ten single men across the ACT, increasing to 20 single men by 2005–06. Five of these places are designated for men who are leaving the criminal justice system.

In 2004–05 the ACT Government also provided recurrent funding to the Canberra Emergency Accommodation Service of \$1.595 million over four years. This initiative becomes recurrent funding at the end of four years.

In addition to this, the following services were established:

- three outreach services, targeting women, men and young people
- SAAP Resourcing and Development Service, which provides assistance to SAAP providers to respond to service users with diverse and complex needs.

A number of housing and tenancy models and initiatives are being developed and trialed in the ACT that promote person-centred accommodation options for people with disabilities. These models and initiatives include:

TAS Housing, a funded non-government provider, received Innovation Grant funding from Disability ACT to undertake development work on a new support model.

Centacare received Innovation Grant funding from Disability ACT and community-housing funding to develop the LINC project to provide a community living housing and support model for nine people with a disability.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required. This recommendation is about ensuring quality of life for current and future generations, and thus is ongoing. However, from the measures taken since the recommendation was made, I am assured that Government is addressing the matter from a number of perspectives. I will report again on housing and housing affordability in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.13

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should implement programs aimed at reducing gaps in health outcomes for Aboriginal people

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Forum, a joint forum with membership from Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, the ACT Government and the Australian Government, is currently developing a new ACT Health Plan for 2004 to 2008.

A three-year funding agreement has been negotiated and signed with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service (2004–05 to 2006–07), for the provision of an expanded Aboriginal Midwifery Access Service, a Hearing Health Program, a Dental Health Program, a Mental Health Liaison Service, a Dual Diagnosis Program, and a Youth Detoxification Support Service.

Refurbishment of the Narrabundah Health Centre has commenced to prepare for the relocation of Winnunga Nimmityjah from Ainslie to Narrabundah in late 2004.

A feasibility study is being undertaken into the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation service in the ACT, using national and international models of drug and alcohol rehabilitation to inform the process.

A Health Information Project has commenced, to address problems with the availability and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health information and statistics in the ACT. The project will improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit's ability to meet its National reporting obligations, and establish a repository for the ongoing collection of evidence to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy development.

Government action to 30 June 2005

A draft of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Family Wellbeing Plan for 2005–2010 has been completed, and will soon be finalised. The Plan is expected to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT by taking a family-centred and holistic approach. The Plan aims to initiate coordinated cross-government action to address not only primary and acute health care, but also health issues relating to housing, education, justice, disability and aged care.

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service relocated from Ainslie to much larger and newly refurbished premises in the Narrabundah Health Centre in September 2004. ACT Health's commitment to fund outgoings and the application of minimal rental for the area occupied by Winnunga Nimmityjah has significantly contributed to the financial capacity of the service to meet the needs of its clients.

The 2004–05 Budget made provision for the conduct of a Feasibility Study for a Bush Healing Farm in the ACT by ACT Health. ACT Health convened a Committee of representatives of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the ACT COAG Trial Indigenous Working Group and ACT Health to visit Indigenous drug and alcohol centres in America, Canada and Australia with a view to providing input to the Study. The Committee has prepared a Summary Report of the visits that was presented to the ACT COAG Trial Steering Committee and will be provided to the Feasibility Study consultant.

The Health Information Project was completed in March 2005, and identified a number of initiatives to improve the quality and availability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health data in the ACT.

Work on these initiatives is currently underway. The project also established a repository for the ongoing collection of local statistics.

The ACT Health Cultural Respect Implementation Plan was recently endorsed by the Portfolio Executive and will soon be published and officially launched. The Plan is a significant means of ensuring that ACT Health services are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Plan incorporates strategies that will ensure that the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are considered and taken into account in the development and delivery of new policies, strategies and programs. For example, the Plan provides guidelines to assist ACT Health to consult appropriately and effectively with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Plan also incorporates various strategies to ensure that well-targeted cultural awareness training is provided to all ACT Health staff.

Commissioner's comments

Mostly implemented. This recommendation is about ensuring quality of life for current and future generations, and thus is ongoing. I am reassured by the holistic approach adopted by the draft ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Family Well-Being Plan 2005–2010. Given that the plan had not been finalised at the end of the financial year, I will follow up this recommendation again in my annual report for 2005–06. I will also report again on community health (including Indigenous health) in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.14

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should assist support services and facilities to keep pace with the increasing demands of an ageing population

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The Government implemented the Building for Our Ageing Community strategy in December 2003. This strategy will address issues surrounding aged persons' accommodation in the ACT in the short term, and for the next ten years and beyond.

The ACT Office for Ageing, within the Chief Minister's Department, is also facilitating a Whole-of-Government approach to the implementation of the Government's commitments in the Plan for Older Canberrans, which include the key themes of: affordable housing and accommodation; the knowledge capital; fairness in the workplace; health and community care; respite care; elder abuse prevention; transport; and concessions for seniors.

Older persons' housing has been a priority for the Government. Over 10% of public housing properties are designated for older persons. 45 units designated for people of pensionable age have been delivered since the 2001–02 financial year. This program will ultimately deliver a further 200 units by the end of 2006.

In addition, expenditure under the disability modification program has increased substantially and responds to the needs of existing elderly tenants, allowing them to 'age in place'. Expenditure on this program was around \$1.5 million in the 2003–04 financial year and similar levels of expenditure are expected to be achieved in 2004–05. Around 90 major modifications were carried out in 2003–04 together with close to 300 more minor but significant modifications. All modifications have assisted older tenants to remain in their homes.

The Government has also established an eight-person supportive accommodation unit (known as Betty Searle House) on the south side of the ACT. Betty Searle House was opened on 23 March 2004 and provides affordable, secure housing for women aged over 55 years who have experienced family breakdown including domestic violence and/or elder abuse.

The Government also funds the Council for the Ageing to provide an Older Persons Housing Advisor to assist older people to access appropriate housing options.

Older people with a disability (aged 55 upwards) are also identified as a specific target group for improved arrangements in Disability ACT's four-year planning document, *Future Directions: A Framework for the ACT 2004–2008*.

Under the 2003–08 Australian Health Care Agreements, the Commonwealth Government will contribute \$5.2 million in funding under the Pathways Home Program initiative to assist in the construction costs of a 60 bed sub-acute facility for rehabilitation and older person's special needs in the ACT and surrounding region. The facility will be located at Calvary Hospital, and a master plan for the development of the facility has begun.

The services to be provided through this new facility will address the needs of patients, particularly older patients, following hospitalisation, and will aim to maximise quality of life and independence and to enable greater confidence in returning home following hospital treatment. The facility will also provide enhanced care for older people who require hospital care for dementia and other related illnesses.

Funding was allocated in the Respite Budget Initiative for 2003–04 for an open tender for the trial of a centralised booking and assessment service with the Home and Community Care program, and for recurrent funding of innovative respite services. Respite care support and services will be provided to aged people, people with a disability, people with a mental illness and people with chronic care needs due to injury, illness or drug and alcohol use with a mental illness, and Overnight Respite Care Service for aged and younger people with disabilities from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

ACT Health is working with the Commonwealth Government on an intermittent care proposal, which will focus on restorative care for older people who do not require acute care.

Government action to 30 June 2005

- *Positive ageing initiatives*

The ACT Office for Ageing, within the Chief Minister's Department, is facilitating a Whole-of-Government approach to the implementation of the Government's commitments in relation to positive ageing, which include: the allocation of \$1.4 million over four years to fund the Government's Ageing Agenda, which includes a comprehensive range of positive ageing initiatives such as a Seniors Information Service, a Seniors Expo, and Seniors Grants Program; the allocation of \$0.411 million over four years to fund the ACT Government's Elder Abuse Prevention project; and substantial completion towards a mature age employment strategy.

- *Pathways Home Program—Sub-acute Facility*

Design work on the new subacute facility at Calvary Hospital was completed in May 2005. The project will deliver a total of 60 new beds, 40 beds for aged care and rehabilitation and 20 beds in a purpose built older persons' mental health unit. The new unit is expected to open in December 2006.

- *Respite Budget Initiative 2003–2004*

Northside Community Service was the successful tenderer and has received funding to conduct a pilot program to improve the coordination of assessment, referral and booking of home based respite care. The aim of the pilot is to develop a central point of service access for clients and carers, reducing the requirement for multiple assessments and improving the administrative elements of client referral and the management of client information. The Pilot has been renamed the Centralised Assessment, Referral and Information Service in order to reflect the full nature of the service and in response to surveys of community recognition.

The Flexible Family Respite Program managed by Centacare aims to provide individual respite care support and services to a minimum of 50 clients per annum. The target groups are aged people, people with a disability, people with a mental illness and people with chronic care needs due to injury, illness or drug and alcohol use with a mental illness. The aim of the program is to reduce the ongoing need for formal respite, through promoting a positive adaptation to care giving and fostering the independence of the carer and the person being cared for. The Program has established a linkage with the Respite Care ACT's Family Mental Health Respite Care program and where appropriate, clients unable to be accommodated on the Centacare program are referred to Respite Care ACT.

Home Flexi Care's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Overnight Respite (CALDOR) Program is to provide up to 14 days in-home respite for carers of a person with dementia, an older person, or a younger person with a disability. The program offers flexible services to meet individual needs and can include overnight services. Information on the CALDOR Program has been translated into 14 languages.

- *Intermittent Care Service pilot project*

In a joint initiative with the Australian Government, the ACT Government established a pilot Intermittent Care Service in February 2005. The new service provides care packages for 25 elderly clients to assist with early discharge from hospital, or to avoid a hospital admission altogether. The pilot program is to be extended into the future and linked to a number of bed-based packages to provide even broader client options.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required. Government has reported a number of programs and projects in place that are designed to address the demands of the ACT's ageing population. Implementation of this recommendation is essentially ongoing until at least the peak of the age cohort has passed. I intend to follow this matter up in the ACT 2007 SoE Report, including an assessment of the extent to which services and support are keeping pace with demand.

Recommendation 2003.15

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should increase professional development and employment opportunities for the young and disadvantaged

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The ACT Government continues to fund the training of Apprentices and Trainees during times of near-record growth. Opportunities in the Building Industry have increased and offer real training opportunities to young people. The combination of work and training in the New Apprenticeship scheme builds skills and knowledge.

Disadvantaged groups figure significantly in training programs offered by the Department of Education and Training. The recent grants allocated under the Special Purpose Program features a wide range of training options for disadvantaged groups. The Adult and Community Education grants provide further funding for disadvantaged ACT citizens.

The Government is establishing a new initiative with a focus on skills development for youth at risk. This was signalled in *The Economic White Paper* as Recommendation 34 and within action 5.1 in the *Canberra Social Plan*. Individual case management and special training programs form the basis of this new approach to mentoring youth at risk. The contract process has been completed and the recruitment of suitable personnel is being finalised.

Government action to 30 June 2005

As previously noted, the ACT Government continues to support the training of New Apprentices, and in the twelve months to 30 June 2005, no applicants have been refused funding support. Figures for the March quarter indicate the numbers of New Apprentices in training are at their highest level to date—increasing by 2% from December 2003 to December 2004. There is continued demand for New Apprenticeships in a range of skills shortage areas including Building and Construction, Electrotechnology, Community Services, and Health and Hospitality.

During 2005 the ACT Department of Education and Training piloted the Training Pathway Guarantee, an initiative designed to assist young people who had not made the transition from Year 12 to either further education or to work and training. As a result of the pilot program, 30 young people are now in funded vocational training. The program will run again in 2005–06.

Also commencing in late 2004 was the initiative signalled as Action 34 in *The Economic White Paper*: the Young Adults at Risk – Developing Skills (YARDS) program. The Canberra Institute of Technology has been funded to deliver YARDS, and has employed two Youth Transition Workers as dedicated staff on the program. Participants are referred from such agencies as Youth Justice, Turnaround and Job Placement, Employment and Training. Referrals are steady and include two self-referrals, which is an indicator of word-of-mouth recommendations amongst the peer group. Future plans include sustained connections and pathways with Youth in the CITY, ACT Youth Connections and the Ted Noffs Foundation, as well as continued links with Youth Justice, and other youth services. The learning program offers Group Participation, Personal Effectiveness, Prepare for Work, Work Experience, and national Literacy and Numeracy units.

Another program funded by the ACT Department of Education and Training for young people at risk is Students Participating in Community Enterprises (SPICE), which is run by Volunteering ACT. Since the beginning of Term 1, 2005, high schools have referred 96 students to Volunteering ACT for the

SPICE program. Participants undertake one day in the workplace each week for four weeks, with an option to continue if students and employers are satisfied with progress. To date, 36% of the placements have been in the automotive industry and 28% in the retail/food industry.

The ACT Department of Education and Training also funds the Construction Industry Training Council to conduct two mentoring programs for students at risk of not completing Year 10. Each of these programs has approximately 12 participants who are undertaking School Based New Apprenticeship programs in the Building and Construction industries.

Under the Strategic Priorities Program, which focuses on the delivery of training to meet the needs of specified equity and target groups, several programs are currently underway for disadvantaged people, many of whom may also be young people. Examples include: the Certificates I and II in General Education for Adults, and the Diplomas of Business and e-Business.

The Adult and Community Education program as funded by the ACT Department of Education and Training in 2005 is offering the following programs that welcome participation by the young and disadvantaged: Digital Divide, Parent Effectiveness Training, Links to Learning - Volunteer Literacy, Building Bridges, and Keying in Touch.

The Chief Minister launched the ACT Public Service Employment Framework for People with a Disability on 9 September 2004. The Framework was developed by the Chief Minister's Department with assistance from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) and aims to provide a set of strategic practical actions, to address the key barriers to employment for people with a disability. These key barriers were identified by a range of stakeholders through consultation.

As part of the Framework, DHCS developed an online toolkit as a resource for current and prospective DHCS staff members. It provides employment advice for people with a disability as well as DHCS managers with knowledge and information about the resources available to support workplace diversity across the Department.

Post School Options funding is available through Disability ACT for young people with a disability aged 18–25. The funding is for a period of three years to assist with the transition from school to employment or other community-based day options.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required. Implementation of this recommendation is ongoing, especially in light of the many variables that come into play with ensuring a future skills base for the community. Recent economic trends have lent themselves to the sort of programs for youth employment opportunities that have been commenced or undertaken since this recommendation was made, a number of which focus on disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities. I intend to follow up ACT Government work to foster employment and development opportunities in the ACT 2007 SoE Report, for youth generally as well as for the disadvantaged.

Recommendation 2003.16

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should improve access to support services and provide dedicated acute care, day and long-stay accommodation for children and adolescents with a mental illness

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003–2008 outlines the need to investigate the accommodation and inpatient options for young people. The strategy focuses on improving the partnerships between the community and Government sector, and planning effectively for the provision of these services.

Specific actions included in the Plan relevant to this recommendation include:

- establishing a plan and feasibility study to assess the demand for inpatient services, including child and adolescent inpatient services
- enhancing coordination between inpatient and community based mental health services
- establishing a peer support system for young people and their families experiencing their first admission within a mental health inpatient facility
- improving the awareness and understanding of mental health issues in accommodation providers
- collaboration with Government and community agencies to ensure equitable access to supported accommodation for consumers with mental illness
- more active specialist mental health support for accommodation providers, where consumers with mental illness reside.

The Government provided \$60,000 in the 2004–05 budget for a feasibility study into the provision of a child and adolescent in-patient unit. Funding of \$105,000 was also allocated in the 2002–2003 Respite Care Budget Initiative for Carers of People with a Mental Illness. This funding has now been made recurrent.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has a day program which caters for adolescents aged 12 to 18 years with moderate to severe mental illnesses. This program runs during school terms, and provides educational, group and individual therapy to all participants.

The Eating Disorders Unit also runs a part time day program for young people suffering from an eating disorder. The program runs for three half-days per week and includes group therapy and meal supervision.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The feasibility study and services planning for mental health services, including child and adolescent mental health services is in progress and is expected to report in September 2005.

ACT Health continues to implement the actions within the ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003–2008, including exploring opportunities for improving access to a range of accommodation options for people with a mental illness.

Mental Health ACT is also developing an education and training program to provide education and training within Mental Health ACT and to other agencies, including supported accommodation providers.

A group of CAMHS clinicians is currently designing a questionnaire, which will be given to all clients and families in regard to their needs when first accessing the service. The answers will initiate the setting up of a peer support service for adolescents accessing CAMHS/Inpatient facilities for the first time. This will be done in partnership with the two Mobile Intensive Treatment Team services.

Commissioner's comments

Partly implemented. Specific actions relevant to this recommendation that were identified in the ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003–2008 are a first step. I will follow-up actions in my next annual report particularly in relation to the feasibility study for which the report is due in September 2005. I will be keen to identify whether adequate funding has been made available for implementation of programs designed for children and adolescents with a mental illness. This recommendation relates to inter- and intra-generational equity.

Recommendation 2003.17

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should implement the Sustainable Transport Plan 'principles for managing change' in *The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan* and manage parking to assist in achieving sustainable transport outcomes

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The ACT Government has released *The Sustainable Transport Plan* and is funding priority projects in the 2004–05 budget.

The Sustainable Transport Plan (the Plan) provides the direction and actions to maintain the high levels of accessibility of Canberra and at the same time achieve a shift towards a more sustainable transport system over the next 20 to 30 years. With this Plan, Canberra will achieve a transport system that has lower overall costs, particularly lower greenhouse gas emissions, lower air pollution, reduced accidents and lower health costs, and more transport options for the community. The proposed transport system will also support the achievement of the economic and social goals for Canberra as outlined in the Canberra Plan. Key elements of the Plan feature in the *Canberra Spatial Plan*, and complement the Government's *Sustainability Framework* and *Greenhouse Strategy*. The Plan also helps deliver on the nationally adopted Charter for Integrated Transport and Land Use Planning.

The ACT Government has funded the priority initiatives under the Plan in the 2004–05 budget. These initiatives include the design of a busway from Belconnen to Civic and the construction of the first stage and design of further stages of a busway from Gungahlin to Civic.

These busway projects will include initiatives such as real time information system for Canberra's public transport system and the development of new interchanges and stations on these routes.

The Sustainable Transport Plan recognises the need to manage parking effectively to achieve the goals of the Plan. The Government has initiated a study of parking strategies and policies to provide Government with recommendations about parking management policies. These parking management policies are one component of a series of interdependent implementation actions in the Sustainable Transport Plan.

Other relevant components of *The Sustainable Transport Plan* include a proposal to encourage the use of low-emission vehicles and the purchase of low-emission vehicles for the ACT Government fleet.

Government action to 30 June 2005

Numbers of key priority projects identified in the *Sustainable Transport Plan* were progressed during 2004–05. The following provides the summary of the implementation progress:

- Belconnen to Civic busway—Belconnen to Civic transit corridor has the highest potential for bus patronage. *The Sustainable Transport Plan* identified this as a high priority project. Around \$6 million was allocated to design a busway between Belconnen and Civic that provides fast, efficient and reliable public transport as a competitive alternative to use of cars. A route proposal was announced on 14 January 2005. The route option provides high quality and efficient accessibility to the seven institutions on the route. This includes hospital and educational institutions. Consultants are now progressing with a Preliminary Assessment, including determination of a final route for the busway.
- Gungahlin to Civic bus priority Stage 1—Considering the growth in Gungahlin, the *Sustainable Transport Plan* identified this project to be synchronised with land development. A three-staged public transport corridor development is proposed. This Stage 1 involves providing a bus lane at the congested part of Flemington Road. The final design of this bus lane was completed by June 2005 and construction will now follow. This bus lane will allow buses to bypass the queue at the intersection of Federal Highway. This will provide primary benefit to bus users through reduced delay and more reliable bus service.
- Gungahlin to Civic bus priority Stage 2—A feasibility study on bus priority along Northbourne Avenue is in progress. This involves bus priority measures along Northbourne Avenue, including ‘right-of-way’ arrangements to buses. This feasibility study will be completed by this year.
- Real Time Passenger Information System—This system provides certainty of bus travel by providing accurate bus travel information together with providing bus priority at 100 traffic lights. Feasibility, requirements specification and draft tender documents have already been completed. The 2005–06 budget process allocated \$6.7 million to implement the system. Tenders will be called in the third quarter of this year.
- Travel behaviour change projects—A pilot project was completed in November 2004. Following this, large-scale voluntary travel behaviour project was commenced by inviting expressions of interests from potential suppliers. This project would invite around 11,000 households to participate in the voluntary travel behaviour change project. These projects will use a social marketing approach for behaviour change toward environmentally friendly and sustainable modes of travel. Experience of ACT and other jurisdictions shows that this type of projects reduces amount of car travel by 5–15%. The aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 74,000 tonnes over a five-year period. In addition, two projects targeting workplaces have been completed and another major employer who has around 7,000 employees has been invited to participate.
- Cycling and walking infrastructure network improvements—In 2004, a *Ten Year Master Plan* was completed to achieve an integrated walking and cycling path network. Implementation of this master plan has already been commenced during 2004–05, by committing around \$1 million for improvements. Similarly in the 2005–06 budget, \$0.5 million is allocated for cycle path improvement and additional funds of \$0.7 million is allocated for sustainable transport initiatives in relation to walking and cycling.

- Bus interchange upgrades and bus system improvements in Belconnen—Preliminary design is in progress to provide more efficient bus movement within the town centre and integration with the busway.
- Demand Responsive Feeder Services—Booz Allen Hamilton has completed an initial feasibility study of Demand Responsive Feeder services using small vehicles. ACTION has since introduced new Demand Responsive evening services.
- Accessible public transport—During, 2004–05, 65 bus stop concrete pads have been upgraded to meet the disability standards. The bus stops are across the network.
- Bike racks on buses—The 2004–05 budget provided funding of \$345,000 for the trial and installation of bike racks on ACTION buses, on the intertown routes between Tuggeranong, Woden, City and Belconnen interchanges. This trial aims to facilitate inter-modal trips encouraging cycling and public transport. The Bike Racks on Buses program is expected to be operational in October 2005.

The initiatives and activities identified in the Government's update demonstrate progress in implementing this recommendation.

Commissioner's comments

Partly implemented. This is a lengthy and challenging project that is integrated with implementation of the *Canberra Spatial Plan*. Government's endorsed response and actions to 30 June 2005 indicate an approach that is consistent with the principles that, at the time of writing the ACT 2003 SoE Report, were included in *The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan*. It is important that implementation actions remain consistent with the original principles for sustainable transport. I will follow this up again in that context in my annual report for 2005-06.

Recommendation 2003.18

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should develop data records for Community Participation and Heritage that meet needs for reporting purposes, including State of the Environment and State of Heritage reports

Endorsed Government response

AGREED. The ACT Governments recently released the sustainability report *Measuring our progress—Canberra's journey to sustainability*. This report used 29 headline and 50 supplementary indicators to measure progress towards sustainability. Indicators on volunteering, participation in cultural events, participation in physical activity, and contact with family and friends were included in this report.

The data for these indicators were sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and provided a baseline from which to measure community participation in the ACT. As future reports are prepared there may be scope to conduct more detailed research into community participation with regards to people with disabilities and the Indigenous community.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The purpose of developing data records is to ensure that accurate and relevant information is provided to assist the decision-making process.

The ACT sustainability report *Measuring Our Progress*, which was first released in 2004, has established data records for key indicators of community participation and heritage, as part of a suite of sustainability indicators. The indicators provide a reference for the effect of Government policy in the community, and the data records for these indicators will be enhanced as future *Measuring Our Progress* reports are prepared, because they will allow for trends to be established.

With regard to participation, one of the priorities of the *Canberra Social Plan*, which was released in February 2004, is a safe, strong and cohesive community. One of the key progress indicators for the Plan is to maintain the proportion of Canberrans attending and participating in community, sporting and cultural events.

As part of the *Canberra Social Plan*, the Government has also established the Community Inclusion Board as a source of high-level community advice on social priorities. The Board's priorities, which include Indigenous Disadvantage, and Neighbourhood and Belonging, have at their core a desire to address the causes of social exclusion.

The basis for making decisions and monitoring progress in these priority areas under the *Canberra Social Plan* is accurate and relevant information provided through data records. The Plan states (page 66) that the ACT sustainability report, (*Measuring Our Progress*) 'will allow measurement of the influence of the *Social Plan*'. Other data records are maintained by the areas within Government who are responsible for implementation of particular initiatives under the Plan.

To support the implementation of the new *Heritage Act 2004* (which commenced on 9 March 2005) with its new ACT Heritage Register, an Oracle spatial database has been designed and developed to a testing and data validation stage. The database will manage information on heritage places and objects, natural, Aboriginal, historic and objects. It will soon be providing the Register spatially to key government agencies through DUS's corporate geographic database. Key data will include a heritage item's name/s, location, description, significance, status and date of registration.

The database will allow for timely and accurate reporting on the Heritage Register, management of the registration processes and gradual improvement of the range of information available for decision-makers and for reporting. A Heritage Register summary listing and detailed listings for all heritage places and objects are already available to the public on the Environment ACT website.

Research has commenced on heritage items with Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) to assess whether they are in need of updating. These will be assessed further for government agencies to ensure they are effectively undertaking their management obligations.

Under the *Heritage Act 2004* (s.109), there are new requirements for public authorities to identify and report on places and objects that are registered or meet one or more criteria for registration. Any place or object identified as of heritage significance must be nominated to the Heritage Register. The Heritage Council can also require a Conservation Management Plan be undertaken and, once approved, authorities must act according to the CMP. As a result, reporting in future should include places and objects identified and nominated by public authorities, those places/objects with a current CMP and additional CMPs undertaken by public authorities on direction of the Council.

Reporting can be developed on the following:

- destruction or significant damage, for example those sites impacted by the 2003 bushfires, non-compliance with heritage requirements, etc
- budget allocations for CMPs and works to ACT government heritage places and objects
- adequacy of management, for example CMPs in place and current for ACT government (and potentially non-government) heritage places and objects.

It should be noted that individual places are difficult to report on as:

- most sites are managed by private lessees and information is generally unavailable
- the condition of many sites was not well recorded at listing and condition must be measured against the state at listing
- sites with many elements may have variable levels of condition for each aspect.

CMPs or detailed Scope of Works for places can only really be quantified by noting they are present, current and carried out by an appropriately qualified professional.

Commissioner's comments

Implementation progressing. Dialogue with the relevant agencies has commenced and will continue in 2005–06 as the structures for both the ACT 2007 SoE Report and *Measuring our Progress* are developed. The opportunities for expanded reporting on heritage look encouraging, although I note the limitations. I will follow-up on this recommendation in my annual report for 2005–06.

Recommendation 2003.19

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should ensure that biodiversity conservation is always integral to ACT Government planning and management of landuse changes, post-fire recovery programs, and fire prevention programs such as fuel hazard reduction programs, expansion and management of the fire-trail network, creation of fire protection zones

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—In planning for changes in land use or management practices, the Government places a high priority on ensuring that biodiversity conservation requirements are fully considered in the planning and land management projects and processes.

The Fire Management Unit (Department of Urban Services), responsible for strategic planning, technical advice and coordination of fire fuel management, consults with biodiversity experts to ensure its activities adequately address biodiversity conservation issues.

Government action to 30 June 2005

- *Planning process*

The planning process undertaken in the ACT ensures the integration of biodiversity conservation in land use planning and the management of landuse changes. In particular, both the Structure Planning and Concept Planning processes involve detailed assessment of biodiversity matters to derive land use outcomes that protect and incorporate these values. These are detailed below.

Structure Planning Process—A Structure Plan sets out the broad framework (transport network, trees, environmental, open space system) and the landuse patterns (residential, commercial and community sites) for the future planning of a district or part of a district. It establishes a robust and flexible framework of objectives, principles and landuse policies to guide the development of the area within the context of ecologically sustainable development.

In determining the land use patterns for an area the Structure Planning process identifies the key strategic environmental values of an area based on advice provided by Environment ACT. This information is based on the details outlined in Action Plans established under the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* and is used as a basis to determine broad areas for conservation and principles for development in adjacent areas including connectivity and interface requirements.

Using the creation of Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve in Gungahlin as an example, Action Plan 27, *The Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy*, identifies this area as a priority conservation action in the ACT providing connectivity between Majura and Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. In undertaking the land use planning for this, and the adjacent urban areas, these conservation and associated biodiversity issues are recognised and principles and policies identified to ensure that these matters are incorporated. This includes urban edge treatments (for example, edge roads, open space buffers), retention of trees within urban areas and land management requirements and most significantly the creation of a 750-hectare nature reserve that protects the core habitat and biodiversity values of this area.

Similarly, the proposed creation of two grassland reserves and a woodland reserve in Jerrabomberra, as announced by the Chief Minister on 22 July 2004, is an important recognition of the need to formally protect the biodiversity values of these areas. Significantly, the creation of these reserves will provide biological connectivity, linking woodland and grassland habitat between the ACT and NSW within the overall land use structure of this area. In particular, the proposed East Jerrabomberra Grassland reserve is located directly adjacent to the existing Letchworth Reserve in NSW and is an important recognition of cross-border issues in protecting this habitat.

Concept Plans—Based on the principles identified in the Structure Plan, detailed Concept Plans are prepared for individual or parts of suburbs. A Concept Plan specifies notional landuses, broad infrastructure requirements, higher order road network (distributor roads), key features and boundaries of the suburb. It also identifies overall planning principles and mandatory and non-mandatory planning requirements including landuse, land management and urban design that identify how development is to proceed in accordance with the environmental characteristics of the area.

Concept plans use all available environmental information that has been identified as part of earlier strategic planning assessments and augment these with further detailed and site-specific environmental examination if considered necessary as part of a two stage planning process. The first stage involves the investigation of all available information to determine opportunities and

constraints prior to any design being undertaken whilst the second stage tests concept plan options to determine the most appropriate outcome that balances planning and environmental objectives including biodiversity.

Specifically, the environmental assessments that are undertaken as part of the Concept Planning process typically include the following, which are undertaken in accordance with the characteristics of the site and statutory and legislative processes:

- environmental flora and fauna assessment to confirm existing information and identify any management requirements including urban edge treatments and retention of habitat within the urban environment (for example, retaining trees in parks and open space, along road verges and in buffer areas, including drainage channels). To facilitate habitat creation and connectivity within the urban environment Concept Plans recommend that the major roads within suburbs are planted with Indigenous species. It should be noted that all possible effort is made to retain habitat trees but that consideration also needs to be given to safety issues (eg dropping of limbs)
- significant tree survey and assessment to identify/locate existing and potential habitat value assets/corridors, which should be retained or added to when developing the concept plan for the suburb
- geotechnical assessments are instigated in specific areas where environmental values have to be better understood in order to plan appropriately. As an example, the Jacka Concept Plan which encompassed the Horse Park Wetland required an additional geotechnical assessment in order to identify the area of the associated pedoderm to be protected from development and subsequent protection of the downstream Wetland
- bushfire risk assessment is undertaken to identify risks and the required mitigation measures that must be put in place to enable a suburb to be developed in accordance with statutory requirements. These measures include physical design elements as well as management policies and guidelines such as the imposition of Asset Protection Zones both outside and within the suburb. In the latter case this includes the requirement to minimise the risk from ember attack for construction of dwellings to a minimum level 1 construction as set out in the Building Code of Australia within a specified distance of the suburb's edge. These assessments take into account the identified environmental and conservation values of the surrounding vegetation, including biodiversity, in arriving at outcomes to be implemented.

- *Planning Reform Project*

In addition to these planning processes, the planning reform project, particularly environmental impact assessment reforms, provides a framework for maintaining and enhancing the consideration of biodiversity conservation in the assessment of proposed landuse changes. This will be most prominently seen in comprehensive planning studies that will inform and accompany plan variations that involve landuse changes, particularly, but not exclusively associated with, urban capability assessment of greenfield areas.

- *Management process*

Biodiversity conservation is one of the elements considered for fire management programs as outlined in the *Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the ACT* (SBMP) Version 1, released in January 2005. A zoning system has been defined affording differing management prescriptions for varying land parcels. The SBMP states that where fuel management may impact on environmental

values modifications of the fuel management technique will be implemented where appropriate, while maintaining the level of protection.

Each year the Parks and Conservation Service is required to prepare a Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP) that details the activities it plans to undertake to meet the standards specified in the SBMP. The Parks and Conservation Service recognises that some of the activities proposed in its BOP, including fuel management and access upgrades, may impact on biodiversity. For this reason, the Parks and Conservation Service has a procedure whereby Wildlife Research and Monitoring provides it with an assessment of the potential impact of proposed BOP activities on biodiversity.

As far as practical and where it will not compromise achievement of SBMP standards, activities assessed as having a significant potential impact on biodiversity are modified to minimise their impact. When reviewing the BOP, Wildlife Research and Monitoring also have the opportunity to include additional BOP activities specifically designed to enhance biodiversity (for example, ecological burns, conservation grazing).

Wildlife Research and Monitoring is setting up monitoring plots to assess the impact of fire management activities on biodiversity. The information gained from these plots, plus continuing refinements to the assessment process, will improve the knowledge base for assessing the potential impact of BOP activities in the future.

Given the ongoing process established for this matter and the opportunity for monitoring results to be fed back into the SBMP and BOP process, it is considered that this matter is concluded.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required: The arrangements between the Parks and Conservation Service and Wildlife Research and Monitoring should ensure that this recommendation is implemented in relation to land managed by the Parks and Conservation Service.

Government's endorsed response states that a high priority is placed on ensuring that biodiversity conservation requirements are fully considered in the planning and land management projects and processes. However, I remain concerned that planning and landuse considerations focus on possible impacts on threatened species and communities and on 'significant'—that is, large old individual trees—without adequate consideration of other biodiversity that is integral to Canberra's amenity and ethos as the 'bush capital' that is so valued by the community. For example, there does not appear to be any policy on the 'next generation' of native vegetation in the urban area, nor any policy about the desired extent of urban vegetation and habitat.

An inquiry by the ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment is currently addressing the integration of biodiversity conservation in landuse planning in the ACT (particularly in urban areas) and its sub-regions. I will examine recommendations arising from the inquiry in terms of their relevance to the assessment of biodiversity conservation in urban areas for future ACT SoE reports.

Recommendation 2003.20

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should provide appropriate resources and support for improving the comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected lowland woodland and grasslands in the ACT as outlined in the *Draft Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* (as detailed in the priority tasks of Table 6.2 of the Strategy), and for ongoing management of these ecosystems

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The Government announced in the 2003–04 Budget allocation of \$1.67 million over three years for implementing priorities identified in the *Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy*. Two new rangers have been appointed, about 1000 hectares of woodland is being protected in new nature reserves, an education kit for primary schools has been produced, and weed control programs have targeted woodlands.

A native grassland conservation strategy is being prepared in 2003–04. This will examine the conservation priorities for native grasslands and the threatened species that inhabit them.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The priority tasks referred to in Table 6.2 of the *Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* are reflected in the Objectives, Actions and Performance Criteria of the Strategy as set out in Table 6.1 of the document. Reports on progress in implementing threatened species strategies (Action Plans) are made on a rolling three-year basis to the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee.

Implementation of the *Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy* has continued during 2004-05.

Highlights are:

- establishment of Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve and Callum Brae Nature Reserve, including construction of management access roads and culverts, weed control (particularly Serrated Tussock); fencing to secure boundaries and to assist with on-going management; tree planting, and provision of information boards
- conducting ranger guided walks and information stands, hosting the 2004 Great Australian Bushwalk (attended by 1000 people)
- released a brochure *Canberra Nature Park – Bush on your doorstep*, which contains information about woodlands and their conservation, and a map of all Canberra Nature Park nature reserves showing their likely original vegetation
- successful application for Australian Research Council funding for ‘innovative enhancement and management of threatened temperate woodlands for improved biodiversity’. This is a five-year research program and partnership between Environment ACT and the Australian National University (Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies). Research will be focused on replacement of fallen timber, fox control, and biomass management through fire and grazing (by kangaroos). The feasibility of introducing species now locally extinct or in serious decline may also be part of this work

- completion of the *Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy* following a period of public comment in late 2004. The Government is expected to formally release this Strategy in July 2005
- a new nature reserve in the Jerrabomberra valley, west of the Monaro Highway has been established to protect Natural Temperate Grassland and habitat for the Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*). A second reserve east of the Monaro Highway is in the process of being established.

Given the on-going nature of this work, it is considered that this matter is concluded. Copies of reports to the Flora and Fauna Committee on progress in implementing threatened species strategies (Action Plans) can be made available to the Commissioner for the Environment for future SoE reports.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. I congratulate Government on its establishment of the new conservation reserves to help protect grassy woodland and grassland communities; the ACT has an important role to play in the regional protection of these threatened ecosystems. As noted above, other priority tasks outlined in the woodland strategy and presumably also in the final grassland strategy will be implemented progressively. To be consistent with the underlying intent of this recommendation, it will be important for Government to continue to provide appropriate resources to implement the priority tasks outlined in these strategies. I am hopeful that, through grants, the implementation of the grassy woodland strategy has not suffered from the savings that Environment ACT was required to find for the 2005–06 Budget.

I will ask for copies of the reports to the Flora and Fauna Committee and the Committee's comments. The ongoing status of these ecological communities and associated threatened species will be reported in detail in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.21

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should stimulate and reward innovations to minimise resource use identified in outcomes in *The Draft Canberra Spatial Plan*, *The Economic White Paper*, the *ACT Greenhouse Strategy: 2002 Review of performance and options for the future*, the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* and *Think water, act water*

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—Sustainability underpins and provides a long-term strategic direction for the Canberra Plan. *The Canberra Spatial Plan* has as a prime objective the creation of a more contained city in order to limit urban sprawl and make better use of resources. *The Economic White Paper* creates a Commercialisation Fund, which will target innovative technologies and support the government's sustainability agenda. The Fund will complement the existing Knowledge Fund, which includes a sustainability assessment criterion.

The Canberra Plan objectives are further supported through fostering new economic activity associated with resource recovery, through empowering all sectors of the community to regard unwanted materials as resources with value, and through influencing Canberra's development to enable best practice waste management.

ACT NOWaste has established the No Waste Awards for excellence in waste reduction. The Awards will be open to all schools, businesses, government departments and community organisations in the ACT, which have actively implemented waste minimisation initiatives.

The No Waste Awards will not only encourage innovative solutions in waste reduction, but will also serve to promote innovative ideas which can be adopted by others.

The Government sponsors a Housing Industry Association award for best environmental practice and a Master Builders' Association award for energy efficiency.

The Water Resources Strategy *Think water, act water* identifies rewards for innovations and actions to reduce water use. For example appropriate rebates for water efficiency measures. (Some funding for these rebates has been already provided in the third Appropriation Bill, and follow on funding is being sought through the normal Government budget processes.)

The 2004 Budget contained an initiative of \$1.2 million over four years to fund a new home energy efficiency incentive scheme as part of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy. This is in addition to the existing solar hot water rebate scheme.

Government action to 30 June 2005

- *Waste*

The inaugural No Waste Awards were held in conjunction with National Recycling Week in November 2004. The Awards attracted nominations from across all categories. The Australian National University received the Gold Award for their integration of a broad range of initiatives that have demonstrated best practice in waste management across their entire campus. Canberra International was awarded the Silver, with Shop Basics winning the Bronze Award in recognition of their considerable efforts.

Other category winners in the Awards included:

- Waste Wise Schools Award—Farrer Primary School
- No Waste Community Award—National Folk Festival
- Eco Business Award—Old Bus Depot Markets
- Best Practice in Government Award—Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

Case studies are being developed from award entrants that demonstrate best practice waste minimisation. These will be promoted to similar organisations to give them ideas on how they too can reduce their waste.

The No Waste Awards will be held on an annual basis during National Recycling Week.

- *Think water, act water*

The Water Resources Strategy *Think water, act water* was provided with \$280,000 funding under the 2003–04 Third Appropriation. This funding was spent on a pilot Residential Indoor Water Tune-up Program, a revised Rainwater Tank Rebate Program and associated implementation costs.

\$2,070,000 funding was allocated to the implementation of *Think water, act water* in 2004–05, including the delivery of the 2004–05 Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program. The following programs were implemented under a contract between the Office of Sustainability and ActewAGL Corporation:

- Showerhead Rebate Program
- Rainwater Tank Rebate Program
- Indoor Water Tune-up Program
- Dual Flush Toilet Rebate Program
- Outdoor Water Tune-up Program
- Commercial Water Audit Program
- Government Benchmarking Program
- Reporting
- Liaison and Performance

The Office of Sustainability undertook promotion of the programs and had responsibility for recruitment of residential program participants.

\$2,018,000 funding is allocated to the delivery of the 2005–06 Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program. The following programs are scheduled for implementation under a contract between the Office of Sustainability and ActewAGL:

- Showerhead Point-of-Sale Rebate Program
- Rainwater Tank Rebate Program (Internal Connection)
- Indoor Water Tune-up Program
- Dual Flush Toilet Rebate Program
- Outdoor Water Tune-up Program
- Commercial Water Audit Program.
- Recruitment of Program participants
- Reporting
- Liaison and Performance
- Data Provision

The Office of Sustainability will undertake increased community education programs and will undertake an evaluation of the 2004–05 Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program.

Currently, \$1,940,000 funding is allocated towards delivery of the 2006–07 Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program and \$1,979,000 funding for the 2007–08 Program.

- *Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme*

The Government introduced the ACT Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme on 1 January 2005. The Scheme requires electricity retailers to source an increasing percentage of their product each year from cleaner and renewable sources. It establishes an emissions benchmark in line with that in NSW.

- *ACT Energy Wise*

The ACT Energy Wise program commenced in January 2005. It provides a subsidised home-energy audit program. Should householders act on the priorities identified in the audits that deliver best energy efficiency outcomes (with an expenditure of \$2000) applicants are eligible for a rebate of \$530. The program runs for four years at a budgeted cost of \$300,000 per annum.

- *Sustainability legislation*

The Government has committed to develop sustainability legislation for the ACT, subject to consultation with community and sustainability experts. The legislation will be based on the ACT Sustainability Policy *People Place Prosperity*, and will establish:

- A sustainability code of practice
- Financial management guidelines
- Sustainability procurement guidelines
- A sustainability fund
- A framework for sustainability reporting by Government.

The Office of Sustainability component of this recommendation has now been met.

- *ACT Environment Grants*

The ACT Environment Grants Program has been running annually since 1997 and provides financial assistance for community-based environment projects that complement delivery of the Government's environmental priorities. This year it was reviewed to encourage a broader range of community-based environmental projects. Funding priorities now focus on community engagement and developing partnerships with Government, particularly in relation to the Canberra Plan strategic theme: *Living with the Environment—our Bush Capital* which addresses our relationship with our environment in terms of resource use, nature conservation and sustainable environmental interaction. It is anticipated that successful applications for funding from the revised ACT Environment Grants will be announced in July 2005.

- *Sustainable Infrastructure Program*

In 2004–05 the Government implemented the Sustainable Infrastructure Program to supplement capital works projects to enhance their environmental performance. The program supports the implementation of measures aimed at increasing energy efficiency, conserving water, reducing emissions, exploring the use of alternative energy sources and exploring the use of materials and design elements to deliver cost effective enhancements in public facilities and infrastructure.

- *Knowledge Fund Program*

Through the delivery of the Knowledge Fund Program, the Government encourages and rewards best environmental practice by including assessment criteria where applicants are required to provide a response on the quality and contribution of their project to the achievement of environmental sustainability within the ACT and Region. In addition to this, organisations developing projects with an environmental focus have also been assisted. The initiatives and activities identified above demonstrate progress in implementing this recommendation. Reporting against these initiatives and actions will occur through Agency annual reporting (in line with recommendation 2003.22).

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Government has taken considerable steps to acknowledge individual innovations and to stimulate reductions through a range of rebate schemes. This type of activity needs to continue, as there is much scope in the ACT for further reducing consumption of resources. I will follow up agencies' annual reports and may also seek estimates of savings, based on waste diversion and uptake of rebate programs, plus results of the Office of Sustainability evaluation of the 2004–05 Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program, for inclusion in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2003.22

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should, under section 158A of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*, report on the effectiveness of innovations implemented as a result of recommendation 2003.21

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—Innovations to minimise resource use are considered actions that support ecologically sustainable development, and therefore reporting on such innovations is already accommodated under section 158A of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*.

Following Government approval and consultation with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the 2004 Annual Report Directions were tabled in the Assembly in June 2004.

In relation to ecologically sustainable development, the 2004 Directions have enhanced reporting requirements and include:

“Section 158A of the Environment Protection Act 1997 requires agencies to report on agency actions and initiatives taken during the reporting year to support ecologically sustainable development. This requirement is also reinforced by the Government’s People, Place, Prosperity, A Policy for Sustainability in the ACT (March 2003), which emphasizes the importance of the ecological dimension of sustainability, along with the social and economic dimensions.”

A list of information required is also included.

Government action to 30 June 2005

Section 158A of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* requires agencies to report, in their annual reports, on actions and initiatives taken during the reporting year to support ecologically sustainable development.

The *Chief Minister’s Annual Report Directions*, which provide guidance to agencies on what to include in annual reports, were amended in June 2004 to require inclusion of measures taken—as part of normal business, or as new initiatives—that address Government policies and strategies with respect to ecologically sustainable development.

Specifically, the *Annual Report Directions* now state that:

“A statement should be included on measures taken as part of normal business, or new initiatives that address government policies and strategies with respect to ESD, including those related to waste minimisation (NoWaste 2010), greenhouse emission reductions (ACT Greenhouse Strategy), water efficiency (Water Resources Strategy) and transport efficiency...”

Agency annual reports for 2004–05 will provide the first opportunity for this requirement to be fully taken into account.

Additionally, *The Canberra Spatial Plan*, *The Economic White Paper*, the *ACT Greenhouse Strategy*, the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* and *Think water, act water* contain mechanisms and processes to review and report on their effectiveness, which are separate to the requirements under section 158A of the *Environment Protection Act*.

This recommendation has now been met.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. When this recommendation was made the Annual Report Directions did not contain the detail outlined above. In the meantime, the Auditor-General has also identified where improvements can be made in agencies' annual reporting on actions and initiatives to support ecologically sustainable development.

Recommendation 2003.23

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should identify and implement those water use and efficiency initiatives which will yield the greatest environmental, social and economic benefits

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The Government has committed over \$15 million of new funding over the next four years to water resources management.

This includes:

- \$5 million to achieving environmental objectives for improved river health in the Murray Darling Basin as part of the National Water Initiative
- \$816,000 to improved catchment management
- \$180,000 to catchment repair following the fires
- \$954,000 for riparian habitat repair
- \$8.7 million in the 2003–04 third Appropriation and 2004–05 budget to implement the ACT Water Resources Strategy, *Think water, act water*, which identifies water use and efficiency measures targeting the domestic, commercial and government sectors as well as providing a public information and awareness campaign.

Government action to 30 June 2005

- *Living Murray*—Achieving environmental objectives for improved river health in the Murray-Darling Basin as part of the National Water Initiative

The ACT has committed to spend \$5 million and save two gigalites of water under the intergovernmental agreement on addressing water over allocation and achieving environmental objectives in the Murray–Darling Basin (between the Commonwealth and the Governments of NSW, Victoria, South Australia and the ACT). The ACT is currently developing appropriate projects for the expenditure of the funds to meet the objectives. The ACT is liaising with the Murray–Darling Basin Commission regarding the detail of its commitment.

- *Improved catchment management*

A portion of the funding allocated is directed to the development and implementation of catchment management policy, which is the responsibility of the Office of Sustainability. Catchment management policy has been specifically directed to the rehabilitation works and future works program of the lower Cotter catchment. Future governance arrangements for ACT catchments are also under consideration.

- *Think water, act water*

The Water Resources Strategy *Think water, act water* will implement the following program components under the Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program. The component programs will be annually reviewed to ensure least cost water efficiency measures are delivered to obtain maximum savings.

- Showerhead Rebate Program
- Rainwater Tank Rebate Program
- Indoor Water Tune-up Program
- Dual Flush Toilet Rebate Program
- Outdoor Water Tune-up Program
- Commercial Water Audit Program
- Government Benchmarking Program
- Government Reporting and Water Audit Program
- Recruitment of Program participants
- Community Education and Public Awareness Programs
- Evaluation of Program Outcomes
- Progress Reporting.

Allocated Funding for *Think water, act water* to 2007–08

2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	Total
\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Actual—3rd Appropriation	Actual	Actual	Indicative	Indicative	
280	2,070	2,018	1,940	1,979	8,287

The component of this recommendation relating to the Office of Sustainability has now been met.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing implementation, but no further annual report update required. Government activities as part of the Living Murray and improved catchment management are clearly targeted at improved environmental outcomes, but are still in the planning stage. Similarly, while the Water Efficiency (Incentives) Program is aimed at economic and social benefits in the community sector, while achieving water savings, it is too early to assess the uptake of the programs and hence their effectiveness in reducing demand on Canberra's water supplies.

As *Think water, act water* efficiency initiatives were selected on the basis of research and experience elsewhere, I will look forward to relevant review(s) of the program components of *Think water, act water* efficiency initiatives for follow-up in my ACT 2007 SoE Report, particularly in relation to the extent of water savings achieved. For that report, I will also seek a progress report on actual activities for improved catchment management and under the Living Murray, and how environmental, social and economic benefits are being assessed.

Recommendation 2003.24

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should apply the revenue raised through the water abstraction charge directly to catchment management and water efficiency programs

Endorsed Government response

DISAGREE—Directly applying the revenue raised through the water abstraction charge to catchment management and water efficiency programs is inconsistent with the Government's policy of no hypothecation of revenue.

The water abstraction charge reflects those costs associated with water supply, use and management which are not directly faced by ActewAGL. The water abstraction charge is calculated by estimating water supply costs and flow costs.

However the Government has made substantial investment in water resource management (as discussed at 2003.23) and in this financial year it is expected to exceed total funds collected through the water abstraction charge.

Government action to 30 June 2005

During 2004–05 the Government made significant investments in catchment management and water efficiency programs. In addition to on-going commitments, specific initiatives in 2004–05 included:

- the Water Efficiency Program as part of the Water Resources Strategy *Think water ,act water*
- Googong Foreshores management planning
- the establishment of baseline studies to examine the effects of buffers on the rehabilitation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems
- a riparian habitat repair program delivered as River Rescue by Greening Australia
- catchment repair works following the fires, including road and track rehabilitation to improve drainage and control erosion, and riparian vegetation management
- work on developing water allocation principles
- contributions to the Murray-Darling Basin initiatives.

Commissioner's comments

This recommendation originated with the Catchment Reference Group for the ACT 2003 SoE Report and was made in the context of having a guaranteed source of funding for assured coordinated catchment management and water efficiency programs, particularly in the wake of the 2003 firestorm and the continuing drought. Although Government disagreed with the recommendation, its funding and actions in 2004–05 are clearly consistent with the intent of the recommendation. Because of this and the ongoing nature of the activities, I will not follow-up this recommendation in future annual reports.

Recommendation 2003.25

In consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment, the ACT Government should provide sufficient funding to achieve asset management standards for existing infrastructure; and ensure new infrastructure supports sustainable resource use

Endorsed Government response

AGREE IN-PRINCIPLE—The Department of Urban Services has developed a Best Practice Guide for asset management to assist managers and staff to achieve asset management standards for existing infrastructure.

In 2004–05 the Property Forum, an inter-agency group established to coordinate ACT Government property matters, will coordinate the preparation of a comprehensive asset management report on the ACT's property assets.

The Government released two important asset management strategies in 2003–04. The first was the Public Housing Asset Management Strategy. The strategy will ensure that the 11,500 public housing properties are strategically managed for the ACT Government. This includes acquisitions, disposals, and refurbishment of properties to align the portfolio with changing social structures and tenant and prospective tenant needs. The assets will also be managed to respond to environmental standards particularly in the areas of energy and water efficiency.

The strategy protects the Territory's investment in its public housing assets, including management of the preventative and regular maintenance and upgrade programs.

The Government also announced the Community Services Facilities Management Strategy for the 33 community facilities it owns and makes available to the community. That strategy includes a set of principles which are that the facilities exist to support the community, that asset planning and management are an integral part of financial planning, to ensure efficient management of the asset in alignment with Government policy, and that there should be effective internal controls for management and planning of assets. The strategy also requires that asset management decisions meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations, and that as the facilities are owned on behalf of the community, all aspects of maintenance, planning, renewal, acquisition and disposal of assets should be 'transparent to the community'.

The Government is increasingly maximising the reuse or recycling of materials in all refurbishments to reduce the requirement for new materials and thereby reduced energy consumption required in their manufacture. For example, the demolished concrete from the Higgins shops refurbishment was used as road base at the site.

The Government Procurement (Principles) Guideline 2002 includes a provision that Territory entities must consider environmental sustainability in the procurement of goods, services or works. The ACT Government Procurement Board has issued an Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Circular – 2004/07 to provide guidance to Territory entities in meeting this requirement.

Government action to 30 June 2005

In 2004–05 the Government implemented the Sustainable Infrastructure Program to supplement capital works projects to enhance their environmental performance. The program supports the implementation of measures aimed at increasing energy efficiency, conserving water, reducing emissions, exploring the use of alternative energy sources and exploring the use of materials and design elements to deliver cost effective enhancements in public facilities and infrastructure.

The 2005–06 Budget has introduced the provision of funding for capital upgrades, as part of a five-year rolling program, to enable agencies to better prioritise and manage their upgrade programs. As capital upgrade funding is to be provided on the basis of a review of agency asset management planning, sufficient funding should be provided to achieve asset management standards.

Proposals for the construction of new infrastructure are analysed against a set of criteria, one of them being sustainable use of the Territory's resources.

To improve asset management reporting, the *Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions* for 2004–05 have been updated. The Directions require agencies to report on the usefulness, practicality and effectiveness of their Asset Management Strategy. Property ACT has also implemented software improvements to the ACT Government's Property Register to make it more accessible to agencies and staff. The Register provides information on all properties leased or used for by government and includes information on materials containing asbestos.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required. The ACT 2003 SoE Report stated: "New and improved asset management systems are in place for transport and stormwater infrastructure, but maintenance of these assets continues to be under-funded. Of particular concern is the accumulating backlog of maintenance and rehabilitation works, combined with the ageing of the road and stormwater network and the effects of natural disasters."

In my last annual report I also indicated that I would follow up on Recommendation 2000.11 in the context of Recommendation 2003.25; the former recommendation was related to asset management forward planning and addressing renewal needs.

Government's attention to asset management and procurement appears to have improved considerably since SoE reporting on infrastructure commenced. I am pleased to see introduction of both the Sustainable Infrastructure Program in 2004–05, and funding for a five-year rolling program commencing in 2005–06 to enable agencies to prioritise and manage their upgrade programs. The latter is particularly relevant to Recommendation 2000.11.

When establishing the parameters for the ACT 2007 SoE Report, I will explore these programs in relation to the sustainable resource use outcomes achieved through the Sustainable Infrastructure Program and the extent to which the five-year rolling program is meeting the ACT's longer-term infrastructure upgrade and renewal needs. Greater availability of information through agencies' annual reports and the ACT Government's Property Register could also be useful for future SoE reports.

ACT 2000 SoE Report

Recommendation 2000.17

That the ACT Government reviews ACT water quality standards:

- for temperature in relation to recreational use to take account of local climatic conditions
- for aquatic ecosystem maintenance, to include total oxidised nitrogen (NO_x).

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—A revision of the temperature guidelines will be initiated. In regard to total oxidised nitrogen, advice will be sought from the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology on the appropriate level for such a standard.

Government action to 30 June 2005

A reconsideration of the appropriateness of the temperature guideline for recreational use has suggested that the values adopted in the ACT Water Quality Standards for primary contact recreation (15–35°C) is still appropriate for the ACT. This guideline is based on human comfort and safety and as such is largely independent of region. Consequently this guideline is still deemed to be appropriate for the ACT.

In relation to standards for total oxidised nitrogen, the ACT currently does not support the need for a standard. Nitrogen is a plant micronutrient and is essential for growth of algae and aquatic plants. However in most inland waters and in the ACT algal and aquatic plant growth is largely limited by the supply of phosphorus, another plant micronutrient. Consequently, limiting the concentration of nitrogen in waters through setting a standard would not serve to limit algal growth. In some circumstances restricting the nitrogen concentration in streams can have a deleterious effect. An investigation has been undertaken by a research fellow at the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology on the impact of total oxidised nitrogen on waters downstream of the Lower Molonglo Water Treatment Plant. That work concluded that algal blooms in the Murrumbidgee River downstream of the plant were limited by the availability of phosphorus. If nitrogen concentrations were also reduced the potential for algal blooms would not be affected. However, reducing nitrogen concentrations could lead to a greater likelihood of Blue Green Algal blooms, and this group of algae can dominate in low nitrogen environments. Consequently, a guideline for total oxidised nitrogen for protection of aquatic ecosystems in the ACT is not supported.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Government has reviewed its temperature standard and I accept the decision to retain it. I am also satisfied that Government has considered the inclusion of nitrogen in the ACT's water quality standards in the context of the *Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality*, October 2000 and in terms of experience with growth of aquatic plants in the ACT.

Recommendation 2000.18

That the ACT Government establishes procedures to ensure that all builders comply with sedimentation controls during all phases of construction of dwellings

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—It has been government policy since 1997 that builders provide sediment runoff controls in relation to building construction work. The government will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to ensure appropriate compliance with existing sediment and erosion controls for all building work in the ACT.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The Industry Liaison Officer has worked very closely with Master Builders Association (MBA) and the Housing Industry Association (HIA). Both associations have given valuable input in developing Guidelines and Educational material on Sediment and Erosion Control measures for building sites. The Industry Liaison Officer has now developed new Guidelines and Educational material on Sediment and Erosion Control measures for building sites. These guidelines incorporate simple diagrams that are easy to understand and are awaiting final endorsement by MBA and HIA. A new Information sheet—*Keeping Stormwater Clean to Protect Our Creeks, Lakes and Rivers*—also has been developed with positive messages on how environmental performance can be improved.

This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. It is positive to have assistance of the peak building bodies in the ACT. The effectiveness of the guidelines and on-site measures should be reflected in water quality measurements in affected urban drains and lakes in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2000.20

That the ACT Government establish baseline reference data by measuring current levels of dioxins in soils in areas close to and remote from the Totalcare Industries Limited site at Mitchell where clinical wastes are incinerated.

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The Government agrees that it would be useful to know the level of contamination, if any, surrounding the Totalcare Industries Limited site at Mitchell. Dioxins come from a number of natural sources—a 1998 study by Environment Australia concluded that bushfires are probably the largest source of dioxins in Australia—and before it would be possible to interpret testing results it will be necessary to establish background levels.

The Federal Government is looking to establish a National Dioxin Study to determine whether dioxin levels or exposure are a real problem in Australia. It is envisaged that this work will consist of an environmental survey that may be able to establish background levels and at a minimum will take several years to complete.

Government action to 30 June 2005

Results from the National Dioxins Program clearly demonstrate that dioxins in our food, our bodies and environment are low compared to international standards with the risk to human health and the environment low.

Whilst no industrial sample was collected in the ACT, results for the three ACT samples (urban, agricultural and remote) were some of the lowest recorded for the study.

Levels in samples collected in other industrial precincts around the country were similar to urban areas.

Industrial samples were collected from areas dominated by industry (Gladstone, Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong (Port Kembla), Latrobe Valley, Port Pirie, Perth (Kwinana)).

The Environment Protection Act provides a system for assessing contaminated land in the ACT. In response to the Commissioner's concerns Environment ACT have given a commitment to the Minister that should a more sensitive land use be proposed for the Mitchell site a full assessment, covering Contaminated Sites National Environment Protection Measure standards plus dioxins, would be required.

To date there have been no proposals to change the land use at the Mitchell site.

This recommendation is considered implemented in the context of the previous Government updates and Commissioner's comments.

Commissioner's comments

Given the undertaking by the ACT Government to a full site assessment if a change in land use to a more sensitive use is proposed, I consider no further action on this recommendation is necessary.

Recommendation 2000.21

That the ACT Government reports detailed assessments of current fire regimes for all vegetation types in digital GIS formats, against known historical conditions

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—The 2002 Bushfire Fuel Management Plan will provide details of fire history within the 34 identified ACT fuel management units. As part of the compilation of data for reporting on fire regimes, the Government will include data on intense fires in relation to vegetation types or communities and represent this data in a digital GIS format.

Government action to 30 June 2005

A long-term monitoring program has been established in the non-urban, forested areas of the ACT. This is detailed in recommendation 2003.4. The ACT Fire Response Database is being collated from this data and will report vegetation responses to known fire regimes.

An assessment of the ACT fire history is being undertaken and the results will summarise current fire regimes. When integrated with the revised vegetation data from the long-term monitoring program a more complete picture of the assessments of fire regimes will be available and will be used for future fire management planning. This recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented (see also comments under Recommendation 2003.4). I will report on outcomes within the context of the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Recommendation 2000.25

That the ACT Government reviews the methods used to measure surface water quality, to develop a framework that better integrates biological assessment of water quality for different uses, with physico-chemical, stream flow, sediment load monitoring and habitat assessment

Endorsed Government response

AGREED—Through the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology, the government is currently engaged in a project to develop a framework for integrated assessment in this field. The annual ACT water quality monitoring program will continue to be developed within the context of advice from the research centre to ensure that the best possible information is obtained for the available resources.

Government action to 30 June 2005

It is understood that the intention behind this recommendation is to ensure that both biological and water quality data are available at each monitored site to ensure comprehensive evaluation is possible. The Government currently monitors water condition at two sets of sites: AUSRIVAS sites at which both biological and water quality data are collected; and water quality sites. At AUSRIVAS sites an integrated assessment of river condition is possible as both biological, habitat and chemical data is collected. Biological data is not collected at all water quality sites as these sites are intended to provide information on the major pollutants in ACT waterways. While biological data at all other monitoring sites would be beneficial for providing a more holistic understanding of water quality/river health at each site, other priorities mean that there are insufficient resources for this sort of monitoring. Additionally, prior to 2000 a much greater number of AUSRIVAS sites were monitored as part of a Commonwealth program. Since then the AUSRIVAS program has been reduced to a level that is supportable in the long term.

As a result of clarifying this recommendation, discussions will continue with the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment about ways the Environment Protection Agency can best support SoE reporting of water quality and river health in the ACT.

Commissioner's comments

Ongoing, but no further annual report update required. Changes in the AUSRIVAS program since this recommendation was originally made have affected what is now practicable in relation to this recommendation. Comments made in the ACT 2000 SoE Report that led to this recommendation appear to still be relevant; however, I am conscious of resources and am very keen to work with relevant ACT Government officers as suggested above for reporting on water quality and river health in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

ACT 1997 SoE Report

Recommendation 1997.12

That greater coordination and support for community monitoring of land quality be engendered to streamline data collection and transfer to relevant bodies, as well as to improve analysis of data, with a profile or directory of community-based environmental groups and their monitoring activities in ACT catchments accessible on the Environment ACT World Wide Web page

Endorsed Government response

AGREED IN-PRINCIPLE—The issue of group profiles is currently being addressed through proposed upgrading of the Parks and Conservation Service database of community groups. Access through the internet is also being considered as part of the upgrading.

Waterwatch will be used as an appropriate model for data collection, as it has already addressed important issues such as determining key environmental indicators, appropriate methodology, and data quality monitoring.

Government action to 30 June 2005

The ACT has commenced a Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funded project aimed at expanding and improving its existing database system, the Integrated Nature Conservation Plan (INCP). This project involves two discrete components: a project reporting system; and a resource condition data catalogue. The project reporting system will provide a central portal for community projects funded through National NRM Funding Programs to report on progress of their projects. The resource condition catalogue will provide a definitive list of ACT Government and Community data, the types of data held, who manages the data, what form the data is in, and accessibility to the data. This resource condition data catalogue forms the first step in developing a resource condition database. The implementation of this enhanced system will also see improvements in monitoring the implementation of the ACT NRM Plan.

Community monitoring projects, such as Waterwatch, continue to be supported by the ACT Government, in partnership with the NHT. Other monitoring projects are being supported through provision of NHT funding in the ACT, such as Greening Australia's Catchment Scorecard project, which monitors fire-affected landscapes and bird species utilising revegetation sites.

The Territory review of its specific strategy for support of community environmental volunteers 'Working Together for the ACT's Environment: A Support Strategy' is underway with support from Officers of the Australian Government Joint Team. It is anticipated that the review of the document will be completed in July.

The Draft Volunteer Policy and Procedures document has been developed within the ACT Parks and Conservation Service in consultation with Park Care groups, including duty statements, proposed approaches for risk assessment, insurance coverage and standard operating procedures for routine activities. It is anticipated that this document will compliment other ACT and Australian government initiatives aimed at improving volunteer management and community capacity building. The document has the potential to be modified to encompass a broader range of community environmental activity.

A Site Assessment Process has been developed and is now implemented in four Canberra Nature Park reserves. This process aims to develop an agreed annual works program between the Government land manager and individual groups to ensure community activity is targeted to achieving broad NRM outcomes.

A project that has had real success since these fires is affectionately known as CAMPFIRE—Community Assessment Monitoring Program For Fire Impacted River Ecology. CAMPFIRE is a community monitoring network that is monitoring the ecological effects of the January 2003 bushfires on our waterways. CAMPFIRE volunteers collect water quality information from over 25 bushfire-affected site across the ACT.

The initiatives and activities identified above, particularly the work related to the Integrated Nature Conservation Plan demonstrate progress in implementing this recommendation. For the purposes of reporting, this recommendation is considered implemented.

Commissioner's comments

Implemented. Although all developments reported here have not been completed, their objectives are very much in line with the original recommendation. Community contributions recorded in these ways will be accessible for general information and for reporting purposes. I look forward to being able to use the information in the ACT 2007 SoE Report.

Footnote to Recommendation 97.1

This recommendation was originally an attempt to obtain a clearer process for Government's implementation of agreed recommendations from the 1997 SoE report. This issue was also relevant to recommendations in the two subsequent SoE reports.

In 2003–04 it was agreed that tracking of the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations would be incorporated into the Integrated Nature Conservation Plan tool (INCP—see Government Response under Recommendation 1997.12 above) developed by Environment ACT. I indicated in my annual report for 2003–04 that I would 'test' the implementation of this particular recommendation in this year's report. Though the incorporation of the 2003 SoE Report recommendations into INCP has not progressed as planned, the process this year of tracking Government's implementation has been a considerable improvement on previous years. I am hopeful that INCP will be used during 2005–06 to facilitate further improvement.

B.2 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

During 2004–05 staff in this office undertook no formal training in relation to human rights principles. Our office in its role as environmental ombudsman embraces the principle of human rights in that people who have complaints that have not been adequately resolved by other agencies may approach the Commissioner in an effort to resolve the matter.

This office has not been required to scrutinise any proposed legislation directly affecting this office's functions.

There has been no audit or any notification of an audit to ensure the compatibility of the Commissioner for the Environment legislation with the Human Rights Act. Discussions between the Commissioner and the ACT Human Rights Commissioner in June 2005, as a part of the review of latter's enabling legislation, indicated the

legislation creating the functions of the Commissioner for the Environment is likely to be seen to be compatible with the human rights legislation if our act was audited.

B.3 ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment relocated from Dame Pattie Menzies House in Dickson to Level 6 220 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon in December 2004. We ensured that the office would be accessible to people with a disability, and that facilities for the disabled were provided.

The website for this office is structured so that a text-only version for all html pages is automatically created by the content management system currently in use by this office. This can be accessed from a single click on the webpage. All html pages meet basic accessibility guidelines. Most downloadable pdf documents are also published as html, which allows the text-only version to be accessed.

B.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This office did not need to undertake any formal community consultation during 2004–05.

B.5 MULTICULTURAL FRAMEWORK

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report.

B.6 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REPORTING

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report.

B.7 ACT WOMEN'S PLAN

In a small office with reporting functions as our output, one mechanism for contributing towards the ACT Women's Plan is to cover aspects of its objectives in the Human Settlements theme of the ACT SoE reports prepared by this office. Previous reports have included discussions on women's health and socio-economic status. My office will assess ACT Women's Plan objectives during planning for the next ACT SoE report to determine the extent to which and how they might be included in future SoE reports and the availability of relevant data for analysis.

PART C: MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

C.1 MANAGING OUR PEOPLE

C.1.1 Human resources performance and analysis

A review of the Commissioner's position resulted in an increase from 80 days per year to 104 days annually. Two full-time permanent public servants support the functions of the part-time Commissioner. Human resource management and workforce planning options are severely limited in an office of this size that also has limited financial resources. Additional short-term staff are appointed, as funds allow, to help the office deliver key outputs at an appropriate standard, but deadlines are often missed because of inadequate resources.

The continual use of short-term staff is not cost-effective and is an inefficient long-term method of operation for recurring outputs such as SoE reports. Each new short-term person requires training, time is lost while they establish appropriate networks, they frequently leave before the end of their contract to take up permanent jobs thus creating further delays, and the office loses their experience. The time required to train and supervise short-term staff also diverts permanent staff resources from meeting other responsibilities.

The substantial difficulties of this office in balancing the workforce to meet its reporting requirements (both legal and contractual) has been a major issue throughout its lifetime and consistently noted in earlier annual reports.

C.1.2 Staffing profile

The staffing and age profiles are shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Staffing profile

Classification	Employment Status	Employed under:	Category of Employment	Gender
Environment Commissioner	Part-time Statutory Office Holder	S4(1), <i>Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993</i>	Disallowable instrument	F
SOG B	1 full time	<i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>	Permanent	F
SOG C	1 full-time	<i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>	Temporary	M
PO2	1 full-time	<i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>	Temporary	F
ASO 5	1 full-time	<i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>	Permanent	F

Table 4: Age profile

Range	Number
30-34	1
35-39	
40-44	1
45-49	1
55-60	2

C.1.3 Culture and values

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment as an investigating agency must always adhere to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. These standards are reflected in our statement of culture and values in our draft new corporate plan prepared towards the end of the financial year. Further information on our culture and values is provided in Section A1—Mission and Values, and Organisational environment, on page 2.

To achieve objectivity in an ethical manner and with a high level of integrity in both our reports and investigations, staff also adhere to the appropriate standards required of ACT Public Servants.

There are no formal processes in place within this office to receive and handle allegations of potential breaches of the Code of Conduct. If such an instance were to occur, we would be guided by the ACT Public Service Code of Ethics.

C.1.4 Workplace diversity

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report.

C.1.5 Workplace health and safety

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report for policy purposes.

During 2004–05, after relocating to newly refurbished premises, a visit from the Injury Prevention Team was arranged to ensure that the physical set-up in the new office was ergonomic for each staff member. As a result of this check, two new chairs were purchased, as well as document holders, wrist rests and mouse pads.

No accidents or dangerous occurrences that required the giving of notices under section 204 of the OH&S Act occurred in this office.

No investigations were conducted during the year and no formal injury prevention programs were initiated or implemented during the year.

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment does not pay a first tier worker's compensation premium. For this matter we are a subsidiary of the Chief Minister's Department.

ACT Public Sector Workplace Health Strategic Plan

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report for the purposes of the ACT Public Sector Workplace Health Strategic Plan.

During 2004–05 three staff took part in the 'Healthy Worksites Corporate Challenge'. Staff often also walk or cycle to meetings with local agencies to help promote fitness in the workplace.

C.1.6 Learning and development

This office has no formal learning and development plan in place. Learning and development activities are undertaken in response to specific needs of the office and its staff. The draft corporate plan, when finalised, will address the learning and development needs of Office staff. This will be monitored as part of review and planning for the office.

The majority of staff development undertaken in 2004–05 was attending professional seminars and conferences. Office staff undertook a training course in Outlook and a one-day refresher course at a first aid training facility.

There was no uptake of whole of government learning and development initiatives.

No staff were involved in the Executive Leadership Development Program.

No staff were involved in the Take The Lead Program.

C.1.7 Workplace relations

No staff in this office are covered by Australian Workplace Agreements or Special Employment Arrangements.

C.2 GOVERNANCE

C.2.1 Internal accountability structures and processes

The Commissioner for the Environment Dr Rosemary Purdie heads a small team. She is responsible for the functions of the office, both legislative and contractual. Her functions of this office are to:

- produce SoE reports for the ACT
- investigate complaints from the community regarding the management of the environment by the ACT Government and/or its agencies
- conduct investigations as directed by the Minister
- initiate investigations into actions of an agency where those actions would have a substantial impact on the environment of the ACT
- make recommendations for consideration by government and include in our annual report the outcomes of those recommendations
- produce SoE reports for the seventeen member councils and a regional synthesis on behalf of the Regional Leaders' Forum.

At 30 June 2005, Office of the Commissioner for the Environment staff comprised a part-time Commissioner, two full-time permanent staff, and two full-time temporary staff (see staffing profile on page 62).

Remuneration for the Commissioner is determined by the ACT Remuneration Tribunal.

There are no senior management or other significant committees within this agency.

C.2.2 Strategic and organisational planning

The work undertaken by this office is dictated by our enabling legislation. Under the direction of the Commissioner a draft corporate plan was completed for the office during 2004–05 to provide a strategic framework for meeting our obligations. The plan includes key result areas, with objectives and strategies including review processes for each area. As a small team, we meet on a regular basis to review workflows and targets, and forward plan.

An improved system of monitoring inquiries and complaints to this office was put in place early in the financial year.

C.2.3 Fraud prevention

No risk assessments were conducted. This office is covered by fraud control plans of the Chief Minister's Department. No fraud awareness training was conducted.

There were no reports or allegations of fraud or corruption received in this office, and consequently no investigations.

C.2.4 Risk management and internal audit arrangements

This office is covered under the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report.

C.2.5 External scrutiny

The office has not been notified of any external scrutiny of it during 2004–05.

C.2.6 Reports required by legislation

Freedom of Information

Section 7 statement

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment was created under the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 193*.

The two main functions of the office are investigations and SoE reporting. The Commissioner can make recommendations to the ACT Government, but has no power to enforce those recommendations.

This office has extensively used, and continues to seek, people with relevant expertise in supporting the SoE reporting process.

Members of the public can make a complaint to the Commissioner if they have a grievance about the way the ACT Government and its agencies are managing the ACT environment, which has been unresolved through other channels.

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment produces SoE reports. The 1994 edition is available in printed form only. The 1995 edition is out of print. The 1997 and 2000 SoE reports are produced in full on CD-ROM only and can be obtained from this office or sent by post. Executive summaries in print form for the 1997, 2000 and for 2003 ACT SoE reports are also available from this office. Available on our website are the executive summary of the 1997 SoE Report, the 2000 SoE Report in full (except for the 'live' maps), and the 2003 SoE Report in full (except for the maps). The 2003 SoE Report for the ACT will be produced in CD-ROM format as a part of the 2004 Australian Capital Region SoE Report, which is due for completion during 2005–06. The full regional report will subsequently be available on our website.

We have produced a number of Investigation Reports. All are available from our office, and several from our website.

Annual reports are available for each financial year since the inception of the office. The reports since 2000–01 are also available on our website.

All reports are available by phoning our office, and can be posted. Our office is located at Level 6, 220 Northbourne Avenue Braddon; it can be reached by public transport and it is wheelchair accessible.

Section 8 statement

The *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993* provides detailed specifications for the conduct of investigations. These form the basis of our operational procedures.

Section 79 statement

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment did not receive any Freedom of Information requests in 2004–05.

Public interest disclosure

This office is covered by the Chief Minister's Department for the purposes of policies relating to public interest disclosure. During 2004–05 no public interest disclosures related to the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment were lodged.

Territory records

The office had insufficient resources available to complete the requirements of the Territory Records Act during 2004–05. In 2005–06 the office will be considering, as a priority, ways in which to comply with these requirements within the limit of its resources.

C 2.7 Sustainability and environment

Commissioner for the Environment reporting

Not applicable; I am the Commissioner for the Environment.

Ecologically sustainable development

One of the legislated functions of this office is to produce SoE reports for the ACT. One report is produced in the life of each ACT Legislative Assembly. The last two reports have provided an assessment of progress towards sustainability to the ACT Government.

Since 1997, all SoE reports have been published on CD-Rom and the internet, with a minimal amount of hard copies of the executive summary produced for tabling and access purposes. We have also adopted this principle for our annual reports.

Our staff enthusiastically embrace initiatives that involve working in an ecologically sustainable way. In August 2004 we decided to dispense with the use of a car for the office. We now walk, cycle, catch a bus or a taxi to meetings, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping to achieving targets set in the *Sustainable Transport Plan*. As an added benefit, this measure has achieved a financial saving to the office.

With the move from Dame Pattie Menzies House in December 2004, we lost some of the advantages of being in a wholly government tenanted building. Green waste and plastic, tin and aluminium can recycling was provided on each floor of that building. It appears that it will be difficult to get coordinated recycling to occur in our

current situation, given that tenants are not all ACT government employees. Our staff have been taking home green waste and other recyclable material to reduce the amount of waste to landfill. We turn off unnecessary lights, use electronic messaging, recycle paper, turn off our computers at night, and ensure that power saving modes are utilised on equipment.

Since our relocation to 220 Northbourne Avenue, we have been able to obtain discrete electricity accounts for the first time. We intend to monitor use over the next twelve-month period, and to benchmark that for future years. We also intend to monitor our purchase of paper for the same purpose.

We noted very early in the fit out of our new office space that the toilets were not equipped with dual flush fittings and brought it to the attention of the building managers. We were pleased when dual flush fittings were installed.

Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and Bushfire Operational Plans

This agency does not manage or own any Territory Land and is therefore not required to report on its operations in relation to the strategic bushfire management plan or the bushfire operational plans.

PART D: ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

D.1 AGENCY FINANCIAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Office of the Commissioner for the Environment budget for the financial year was \$332,000, which included a small sum of supplementary funding for salary increases. That budget was put under considerable strain due to unavoidable increases in some administrative costs and increased rent. See also Outlook for the Coming Year A.3 Overview of performance and financial results on page 4. The office also received funds from local councils, through the Regional Leaders' Forum, for the preparation of the regional SoE report, which includes individual SoE reports for each council.

Annual financial statements

The Commissioner for the Environment Act does not establish the Commissioner for the Environment as a body corporate. Therefore the financial reporting provisions of the Financial Management Act that apply to Territory corporations do not apply to the Commissioner for the Environment. Expenses for this office are reported as a part of the Expenses on Behalf of the Territory in the Chief Minister's Department Annual Report.

D.2 ASSET MANAGEMENT

This office does not own any assets.

D.3 CAPITAL WORKS MANAGEMENT

This office has no capital works projects.

D.4 PROCUREMENT CONTRACTING PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

During 2004–05 the office was writing the Australian Capital Region SoE Report. Participating councils fund our office to coordinate this activity. As the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment has neither the expertise nor resources to cover every aspect of the task, we employed a number of contractors using councils' funds to provide expert advice and write material. We are responsible for raising contracts but they attract no cost to the ACT government.

One small contract was let by this office to maintain and update our website.

D.5 GOVERNMENT CONTRACTUAL DEBT (INTEREST)

The office has no overdue debts attracting interest.

APPENDICES

1. FINANCIAL REPORTS

1.1 Financial statements

The Commissioner for the Environment Act does not establish the Commissioner for the Environment as a body corporate. Therefore the financial reporting provisions of the Financial Management Act that apply to Territory corporations do not apply to the Commissioner for the Environment. Expenses for this office are reported as a part of the Expenses on Behalf of the Territory in the Department of Urban Services Annual Report.

1.2 External sources of labour and services

Table 5: Output 1.1.1 Preparation of the Australian Capital Region State of the Environment Report 2004

Contracting Entity	Description of and Reason for Contract	Date let	Reason for use of select tender	Amount *
Communication Breakthrough	Science Editor and Mapping Requirement for the Australian Capital Region 2004 State of the Environment Report	20 July 2004	Advanced knowledge in and experience of SoE reporting.	\$0
Global Learning Pty Ltd	Expert science writer for Water Indicators for the Australian Capital Region 2004 State of the Environment Report	2 March 2005 and 1 May 2005.	Expertise in writing for Council State of the Environment Reports.	\$0
Rebecca Hall	Expert science writer for Biodiversity Indicators for the Australian Capital Region 2004 State of the Environment Report	8 March 2005	Science writer with local knowledge of biodiversity issues.	\$0

* The amount is reported as \$0 because the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment used funds received from the 17 member Councils of the Australian Capital Region to enable the completion of the 2004 Australian Capital Region SoE Report. As the coordinating body this office raised contracts in the ACT, at no cost to the ACT government.

Table 6: Other contracts let

Description	Date let	Amount
Website services	20 July 2004	\$10,000.00
Total		\$10,000.00

Construction-related activities

This office has no capital works in progress.

2. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY DATA REPORTS

2.1 Legislation

This office is responsible for the administration of the *Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993*.

2.2 Advisory and consultative boards and committees

The Commissioner has no responsibility for advisory and consultative boards and committees that provide advice to the Minister.

2.3 Service purchasing arrangements, community grants, assistance, sponsorship

No service purchasing arrangements or community grants or assistance or sponsorship were provided by the office in 2004–05.

2.4 Legislative Assembly Committee inquiries and reports

There were no inquiries by Legislative Assembly Committees that relate to the operations of the office.

2.5 Government inquiries and reports

An enquiry relevant to the office—a review of its operation prior to the appointment of a new Commissioner—was undertaken in 2003–04. The review was carried out by Environment ACT on behalf of the ACT Government. Environment ACT is responsible for policy and legislation development of this office. The results of the review and the government’s response were released in February 2005. See Section A2 Major issues, challenges and achievements for the reporting year for further discussion (page 3).

2.6 Reports by Auditor-General

No reports were released by the Auditor-General during 2004–05 that relate to the operations of this agency.

2.7 Reports by the Ombudsman

No reports were released by the ACT Ombudsman during 2004–05 that relate to the operations of this agency.

GLOSSARY, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHC	ACT Homelessness Committee
ANU	Australian National University
APSSA	Association for Post Secondary Student Accommodation
AUSRIVAS	Australian River Assessment System (AUSRIVAS) Assessment Program. The AUSRIVAS method provides an assessment of invertebrate diversity in a stream section at 'test sites' in relation to 'reference sites'.
BOP	Bushfire Operations Plan
CALDOR	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Overnight Respite
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
Australian Capital Region	for the 2000 and earlier SoE reports the Region included ACT, the City Councils for Goulburn and Queanbeyan, and the Councils for the Shires of Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma-Monaro, Crookwell, Eurobodalla, Gunning, Harden, Mulwaree, Snowy River, Tallaganda, Tumut, Yarrowlunla, Yass and Young. For the 2004 report, three new Shires have joined the Region, and several of the original Shires have been amalgamated by the NSW Government. The Australian Capital Region now includes the ACT and the Local Government Areas of: Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma-Monaro, Cootamundra, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree, Queanbeyan City, Gundagai, Harden, Palerang, Snowy River, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley and Young.
CAMPFIRE	Community Assessment Monitoring Program For Fire Impacted River Ecology
CMP	Conservation Management Plan
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRC	Cooperative Research Centres
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
SoE	State of the Environment
DHCS	Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HHA	Havelock Housing Association
HIA	Housing Industry Association
INCP	Integrated Nature Conservation Plan
MBA	Master Builders Association
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSW	New South Wales
SBMP	Strategic Bushfire Management Plan
SOG	Senior Officer Grade
SPICE	Students Participating in Community Enterprises
YARDS	Young Adults at Risk – Developing Skills program

INDEX

A

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders 26–27, 29–30, 38, 61
 ACT Flora and Fauna Committee 44, 55
 ACT Forests 17, 19
 ACT Government's Property Register 54
 ACT Health 13, 30, 31, 35
 ACT NOWaste 46
 ACT Office for Ageing 30
 ACT Parks and Conservation Service 43, 59
 ACT Planning and Land Authority 4, 8
 ACT Weeds Strategy 18
 ActewAGL 47, 52
 Affordable housing *see* Housing
 Aged people 30–32
 Air quality 12, 13
 Algae in water 55
 Alpine bogs *see* Bogs
 Apprenticeships *see* Employment
 Asbestos 54
 Asset management 53–54
 AUSRIVAS *see* Water quality
 Australian Alps Agreement 14–15
 Australian Capital Region, boundaries 4, 5, 6, 7(map)
 Australian National University 44

B

Bendora Reservoir 25
 Bicycles 37, 38, 66
 Biodiversity *see* Ecosystems
 Bogs 9, 16–18
 Budget of the office 3, 4, 5, 62, 66, 68
 Buildings *see* Construction of houses
 Buses 36–38, 66
 Bushfires 22, 25, 50, 57, 67
 hazard management 8, 15, 40–43
 history 15, 57–58
 recovery 9, 14–15, 16–18, 50, 52

C

Callum Brae Nature Reserve 44
 Calvary Hospital 31, 32
 Canberra Plan 5, 45
Canberra Social Plan 25, 33, 39
Canberra Spatial Plan 36, 38, 45, 49
 Cars *see* Vehicles
 Catchments 21–22, 25
 management 15, 18, 50, 52
 see also specific catchments
 Chief Minister 41
 Chief Minister's Department 3, 24, 30, 34, 61, 63, 68
 Children 35–36, *see also* Youth, Mental health
 Cigarette smoke *see* Tobacco smoke
 Classification of ecosystems 15
 Clearing 15
 Commissioner's review 1–5
 Community consultation 23, 61
 Community facilities 53–54
 Community housing *see* Housing
 Community monitoring *see* Monitoring programs
 Community participation 38–40
 Complaints 1, 7–8, 64
 Compliance index 75

Conservation *see* Ecosystems and specific issues and areas
 Construction of houses 8, 56
 Consultation with the Commissioner for the Environment 12
 Contamination 57
 Cooperative Research Centres 14, 16, 17, 55
 Corin Reservoir 25
 Corporate Plan 4, 64
 Cost increases 4
 see also Staffing
 Cotter River 9, 16–18, 50
 CRC *see* Cooperative Research Centres
 CSIRO 19

D

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services 34
 Department of Education and Training 33–34
 Department of Treasury 24
 Department of Urban Services 24, 40, 53
 Dioxins 56–57
 Disabilities (people with) 28, 31, 32, 34
 Disability ACT 28, 31, 34, 38
 Draft Variation 130 8
 Drought 9, 17, 19, 22
 Drug and alcohol use 29, 31, 32

E

Ecological communities, classification 15
 Ecologically sustainable development 41, 66–67
Economic White Paper (The) 33, 45, 49
 Ecosystems 14–15, 16–18, 22, 40–43, 44–45, 52, 55, 57
 Emergency Services Authority 14–15, 22
 Employment 31, 33–34
 Energy use 23, 24, 47, 53, 67
 see also Vehicles
 Environment ACT 3, 8, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21–22, 44, 57, 70
 Environment Protection Agency 58
 Environmental Health Council 13
 Environmental impact assessment reforms 42
 Environmental ombudsman role 3, 7
 Erosion 9, 16–17, 52, 56
 Extreme events 22
 see also Bushfire, Drought

F

Fairbairn park 8
 Financial performance 4, 68–69
 Fires *see* Bushfires
 Forde wetlands 8
 Freedom of information 65–66
 Fuel loads *see* Fire hazard management
 Functions of the office 1–3, 5, 64, 65

G

Ginini Flats Wetlands 17
 Glossary 71
 Goongong Reservoir 25, 52
 Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve 41, 44
 Governance 64
 Grasslands *see* Ecosystems
 Greenfleet 13–14, 24
 Greenhouse 13–14, 23–25, 36, 37, 45, 46, 47, 49, 66
 see also Vehicles
 Greening Australia 17, 52, 59
 Groundwater 21–22
 Gungahlin Drive Extension 8

H

Health services 29–30, 31, 32, 35–36
 Heritage 38–40
 Homelessness 25–29
 Horse Park Wetland 42
 Housing 23, 24, 25–29, 30–31, 32, 53–54
 Human resources *see* staffing
 Human rights 60–61
 Hybrid vehicles 13–14

I

Illegal dumping on Crown land 8
 INCP *see* Integrated Nature Conservation Plan
 Indigenous *see* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 Infrastructure management 53–54
 Inquiries *see* Complaints
 Integrated Nature Conservation Plan 59–60
 Intergenerational equity 36, 53
 Investigations 1, 7–8, 9, 64, 65
 Isaacs Ridge 19

J

Jerrabomberra 19, 41, 45
 Justice 33

K

Knowledge Fund Program 45, 48

L

Land Development Agency 8
 Land quality 59
 Landuse 8, 17, 40–43, 57
 Lease grants 8
 Legislation
 Commissioner for the Environment ACT 1993 1, 3, 5, 9, 66
 Electricity (Greenhouse Gas Emissions) Act 2004 24
 Environment Protection Act 1997 49
 Heritage Act 2004 39
 Nature Conservation Act 1980 41
 Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005 20
 proposed sustainability legislation 48
 Water resources ACT 1998 21
 Legislative Assembly 1, 23, 43, 66, 70
 Locally extinct species 44
 Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy 41, 44–45

M

Majura Nature Reserve 41
 Mapping programs 5, 6, 15, 20–21, 57
 Master Builders Association 56
 Medical care *see* Health services
 Mental health 29, 31, 32, 35–36
 Mental Health ACT 25
 Minister for Environment 1, 2, 4, 9, 16
 Mission 2, 63
 Molonglo River 16
 Monash 12
 Monitoring programs 12, 13, 14–15, 16, 20, 21, 25, 57, 58, 59–60
 Motorsports *see* Fairbairn Park
 Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve 41
 Multicultural issues 31, 61
 Murray-Darling Basin 50, 51, 52
 Murrumbidgee River 16, 19, 55

N

Namadgi National Park 14–15
 National Environment Protection Measure 12
 National Heritage Trust funds 16, 59
 Native vegetation *see* Ecosystems
 New South Wales *see* Australian Capital Region
 Nitrogen in water 55
 Noise 8
 see also Fairbairn Park
 Nurseries 18–20

O

Office of Sustainability 5, 24, 47, 48, 50–51

P

Particles 10
 Pest animals 44
 Pest plants *see* Weeds
 Pierce's Creek 25
 Pollution 12, 13, 56–57, 58
 Progress on implementation of recommendations
 see Recommendations

R

Recommendations 10–11 (table)
 from 1997 SoE Report 59–60
 Recommendation 1997.12 59
 from 2000 SoE Report 55–58
 Recommendation 2000.17 55
 Recommendation 2000.18 56
 Recommendation 2000.20 56
 Recommendation 2000.21 57
 Recommendation 2000.25 58
 from 2003 SoE Report 9–54
 Recommendation 2003.1 12
 Recommendation 2003.2 13
 Recommendation 2003.3 13
 Recommendation 2003.4 14
 Recommendation 2003.5 16
 Recommendation 2003.6 16
 Recommendation 2003.7 18
 Recommendation 2003.8 21
 Recommendation 2003.9 22
 Recommendation 2003.10 23

from 2003 SoE Report (cont.)	
Recommendation 2003.11	25
Recommendation 2003.12	25
Recommendation 2003.13	29
Recommendation 2003.14	30
Recommendation 2003.15	33
Recommendation 2003.16	35
Recommendation 2003.17	36
Recommendation 2003.18	38
Recommendation 2003.19	40
Recommendation 2003.20	44
Recommendation 2003.21	45
Recommendation 2003.22	49
Recommendation 2003.23	50
Recommendation 2003.24	52
Recommendation 2003.25	53

Recycling and reuse 45–46, 53, 66
 Regional Leaders Forum 1, 5, 64, 68
 Rehabilitation *see* Bushfires recovery
 Relocation of office 4, 61, 63, *see also* Budget of the office
 Research funding 16, 44
 Resource use 45–48, 53–54
see also Energy, Recycling, Water, Waste
 Resourcing *see* Staffing, Budget of the office
 Revegetation 17, 52
 Review of office 3, 70
 River health *see* Water quality
 Roads and bridges 16–17, 52

S

Sedimentation 16, 56
 Shires *see* Australian Capital Region
 SoE *see* State of the Environment
 Spaghnum bogs *see* Bogs
 Special annual reporting requirements 9
 Staff training 63
 Staff training and development 63–64
 Staffing 2, 3–4, 5, 62, 64
 delays in recruitment 4
 Stakeholders 1, 3
 State of the Environment Reports 2, 6, 64, 65
 ACT Reports 1, 3, 4, 9–60
 ACT 2007 Report 5, 12, 14, 21, 22, 25, 28, 30, 32, 34,
 40, 48, 51, 54, 56, 58, 60
 government progress on recommendations 9–60
 Regional Report 1, 3–4, 5, 6, 68, 69
 Strategic Bushfire Management Plan 15, 22, 42
 Students 27
 Sustainable Transport Plan (The) 36–38

T

Temperature of water 55
Think water, act water 21, 45, 46–47, 49, 50–51, 52
 Threatened ecosystems and species 15, 43, 44–45
 Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve 19
 Tobacco smoke 13
 Total oxidised nitrogen 55
 Totalcare site at Mitchell 56, 56–57
 Transmittal certificate
 Transport efficiency 49
 see also Vehicles, Buses

U

Urban development 8

V

Vegetation *see* Ecosystems
 Vehicles 12, 13–14, 24, 36–37, 66
 Volunteering ACT 33

W

Waste 45–46, 49, 53, 67
 Water charges 52
 Water quality 21–22, 55, 56, 58
 Water restrictions 9
 Water supply catchments 16–18, 25
 see also specific catchments and reservoirs
 Water use 9, 21, 45, 46–47, 49, 50–51, 52, 53, 67
 Waterwatch 59
 Weather stations 25
 Weeds 18–21, 44
 Wetlands *see* specific wetlands
 Wildlife Research and Monitoring 43
 Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service 29
 Women's plan 61
 Woodlands *see* Ecosystems
 Workplace diversity 63
 Workplace health and safety 63

Y

Youth 27–28, 33–34, 35–36

COMPLIANCE INDEX

TRANSMITTAL CERTIFICATE	i
PART A: CHIEF EXECUTIVE REVIEW.....	1
A.1 Overview of the agency.....	1
A.2 Major issues, challenges and achievements for the reporting year.....	3
A.3 Overview of agency performance and financial results.....	4
A.4 Outlook for the coming year	5
PART B: AGENCY PERFORMANCE.....	6
B.1 Key Strategic Achievements	6
B.2 Human Rights Act.....	60
B.3 Access to Government Strategy.....	61
B.4 Community engagement.....	61
B.5 Multicultural framework.....	61
B.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting.....	61
B.7 ACT Women’s Plan	61
PART C: MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION	62
C.1 Managing our people.....	62
C.1.1 HR performance & analysis.....	62
C.1.2 Staffing profile.....	62
C.1.3 Culture & values.....	63
C.1.4 Workplace diversity.....	63
C.1.5 Workplace health and safety.....	63
C.1.6 Learning & development	63
C.1.7 Workplace relations	64
C.2 Governance.....	64
C.2.1 Internal accountability structures and processes	64
C.2.2 Strategic and organisational planning	64
C.2.3 Fraud prevention	65
C.2.4 Risk management & internal audit arrangements	65
C.2.5 External scrutiny	65
C.2.6 Reports required by legislation	65
<i>Freedom of Information</i>	65
<i>Public Interest Disclosure</i>	66
<i>Territory records</i>	66
C.2.7 Sustainability & Environment.....	66
<i>Commissioner for the Environment reporting</i>	66
<i>Ecologically sustainable development</i>	66
<i>Strategic bushfire management plan and bushfire operational plans</i>	67
PART D: ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	68
D.1 Agency financial results and analysis of financial performance	68
D.2 Asset management.....	68
D.3 Capital works management	68
D.4 Procurement contracting principles & processes.....	68
D.5 Government contractual debt (interest)	68
APPENDICES.....	69
1. Financial Reports	69
1.1 Financial statements	69
1.2 External sources of labour and services.....	69
2. Legislative/Regulatory Data Reports	69
2.1 Legislation.....	69
2.2 Advisory and consultative boards and committees.....	70
2.3 Service purchasing arrangements/community grants/assistance/ sponsorship	70
2.4 Legislative Assembly Committee inquiries and reports	70
2.5 Government inquiries and reports	70
2.6 Reports by Auditor-General	70
2.7 Reports by the Ombudsman.....	70
ANNEXED REPORTS	N/A
SUBSUMED REPORTS.....	N/A

OUR VISION

A society with the will to achieve a sustainable high quality environment for all

Office of the Commissioner for the Environment
**Level 6 220 Northbourne Ave
Braddon ACT 2612**

**PO Box 356
Dickson ACT 2602
Ph: 02 6207 2626
Fax: 02 6207 2630**

**Email: envcomm@act.gov.au
Website: www.envcomm.act.gov.au**

