

Resource Use

The resource use section in the State of the Environment Report, reports on waste and energy, water, transport and land-use.

Indicators used to assess resource use were:

- Energy Use
- Hazardous Waste
- Infrastructure Sustainability
- Land Use
- Population
- Solid Waste
- Contaminated sites
- Land degradation
- Transport

Key Findings

- use of most resources has increased, except water, which declined due to government imposed restrictions
- urban water use dropped from 65,939 ML in 2002-03 to 52,560 ML in 2003-04 - a saving of approximately 13.5 Olympic swimming pools
- compared to other Australians travelling to and from work, we used our cars more (81%), cycled (2.5%) and walked (4.9%) a little more but used public transport less (7.9%)
- our spending is 20% higher than the Australian average
- we diverted 62% of the total waste stream from landfill for re-use and reduced our waste to landfill by 27%
- total waste produced in 2006-07 compared to 1994-95 was 87% more, yet population growth was around 10 %
- we are the most wasteful jurisdiction in Australia, where each of us spends an average of \$1475 per year on goods used only for a short time or not at all (mostly food). So we can help the environment and save money by reducing our spending on unwanted items.

Information on how to make a change:

- The ACT Sustainable Schools Program helps schools to reduce their overall resource use and implement biodiversity plans:
www.sustainableschools.act.gov.au
- Walking to school produces zero emissions, helps to conserve the atmosphere and it's healthy, fun and free:
www.travelsmart.gov.au/schools/schools2.html
- Planting trees helps remove pollutants from the air and provides habitat and biodiversity:
www.environment.act.gov.au/environment/volunteers/volunteer_groups
- Waterwatch, Frogwatch and CAMPFIRE:
www.environment.act.gov.au/water/waterwatchact
- Landcare, Parkcare, Greening Australia and other community environmental groups:
www.environment.act.gov.au/environment/volunteers/volunteer_groups
- ACT Government Programs and incentives for reducing our energy and water use:
www.environment.act.gov.au/rebates_and_incentives
- Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts:
www.environment.gov.au
- Commonwealth Department of Climate Change:
www.climatechange.gov.au
- ACT Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment:
www.envcomm.act.gov.au
- ACT Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water:
www.environment.act.gov.au
- ACTSmart For Your School - rebates and assistance:
www.environment.act.gov.au
- Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability:
www.ces.vic.gov.au

Climate and Greenhouse

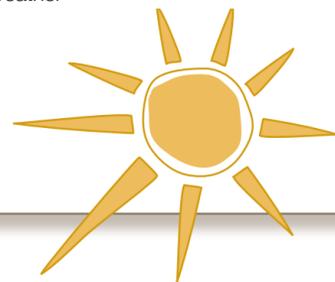
The State of the Environment Report, reports on our greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of weather and climate change on the ACT.

Indicators used to measure Climate and Greenhouse were:

- Greenhouse gases
- Ozone depletion
- Weather

Key Findings

- greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT (in 2005) were comprised of 72.2% from stationary sources such as heating, cooling and lighting; 22.8% from transport; and 4.7 % from waste
- our per capita use of both electricity and gas continues to increase
- greenhouse gas emissions have increased with per capita emissions increasing by nearly 10% since 1990
- the average Canberran was responsible for 13.7 tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2005
- education and behaviour change will play a significant role in reducing emissions and helping the ACT community adapt to climate change now and in the future.



Further information about each paper can be found in the ACT State of the Environment report 2007-08 on our website: www.envcomm.act.gov.au

factsheet for schools

Relevant Essential Learning Achievements (ELA)

- ELA 12 The student takes action to promote health
- ELA 19 The student understands and applies scientific knowledge
- ELA 20 The student acts for an environmentally sustainable future
- ELA 21 The student understands about Australia and Australians
- ELA 22 The student understands and values what it means to be a citizen within a democracy
- ELA 23 The student understands world issues and events

From the 'Every Chance to Learn' Curriculum Framework for ACT Schools: Preschool to Year 10: <http://activated.act.edu.au>



What is the State of the Environment Report?

The State of the Environment (SoE) report provides an assessment of a defined geographical area and the impact of human activities and responses on the environmental condition of that area. Basically, it's a snapshot of how well we are looking after our environment and community.

Who produces the State of the Environment Report and why?

The Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment produces a SoE report every four years. State of the environment reporting is a requirement under the *ACT Commissioner for the Environment Act 1993*.

Structure of the State of the Environment Report

The SoE report provides an assessment of the ACT environment through six issues papers: climate and greenhouse, air quality, conserving biodiversity, catchment quality, resource use and community wellbeing. Over 35 indicators provide data, analysis and interpretation of specific attributes which inform the issues papers.

Our Ecological Footprint 1

The ACT's ecological footprint is a measure of the area of land needed to support the lifestyles of its residents; it includes raw materials for food, building, energy and so on, as well as the area required to absorb the carbon dioxide emitted from our consumption of resources.

An ecological footprint helps us understand the link between our lifestyles and the land and ecology that supports us. The world ecological footprint in 2003 was 2.2 global hectares per person. This is beyond what is available for us to use and shows that it would take 1.25 years to regenerate what humanity consumed in only 1 year.

Key findings

- in 2004 the average ACT resident had an ecological footprint of 8.5 global hectares. This is nearly 4 times higher than the global average and 17% higher than the Australian average (and the average of most States)
- the total footprint of the ACT is 2,677,000 global hectares or 11 times the geographical area of the ACT
- the per capita ACT footprint has increased by 15% since 1998-99
- the sectors of the economy which are highest contributors to the ACT ecological footprint are:
 - services such as telecommunication services, financial services, medical, entertainment and government services.
 - food consumption and delivery
 - energy provision
 - The consumption and delivery of goods
- the Challenge is clear – all of us must reduce our consumption of resources and achieve decreases that will mark progress towards sustainability.



Air Quality

Natural events such as bushfires and dust storms and human impacts from aircraft, cars and wood burning heaters affect both indoor and outdoor air quality.

Indicators used to measure air quality were:

- Air Emissions
- Indoor Air Quality
- Outdoor Air Quality

Key Findings

- minimal outdoor air pollutants due to our lack of heavy industry
- smoke-free air in all enclosed public places due to legislation enacted in 2006
- the majority of our air emissions come from motor vehicles which account for 26.4 percent of air emissions
- legislation banning smoking in public buildings and license premises in the ACT, enacted in December 2006, has greatly improved air quality.

Catchment Quality

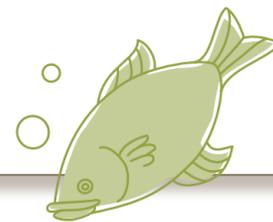
The quantity and quality of our water, is affected by, amongst other things, the way in which catchments are managed.

Indicators used to measure catchment quality were:

- Discharges to water
- Drinking water
- Groundwater
- Land degradation
- Riparian condition
- Surface water quality
- Water use and demand management

Key Findings

- approximately 52-55 GL of water was used per year by the Territory - the equivalent of 52,000-55,000 Olympic swimming pools
- 27-29 GL per year was returned to the Molonglo River as treated effluent - the equivalent of 27,000-29,000 Olympic swimming pools
- reductions in water-use have saved approximately 93 GL, the equivalent of 93,000 Olympic swimming pools or the equivalent of about 18 months water supply
- our awareness and management of urban catchments continues to improve, for example, post the 2003 bushfires, the Lower Cotter Catchment is being managed differently with a focus on water and appropriate recreational activities.



Conserving Biodiversity

The health of and key issues facing our plants, animals and microorganisms and their ecosystems is reflected in the way our biodiversity is conserved and managed.

Indicators used to measure biodiversity were:

- Ecological communities
- Eco-management
- Fire
- Harvesting native species
- Native species
- Pest animals
- Pest plants

Key Findings

- in 2006, the World Wildlife Fund gave the ACT nature conservation estate a "Triple A" assessment, recognising the considerable achievements made in developing a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected areas system for the ACT
- during the reporting period (2003-07), 1457 hectares of new nature reserves were added or announced to the nature conservation estate, taking the ACT's total area protected in nature reserve to 54%
- two of the ACT's most threatened species, the Northern Corroboree Frog and the Grassland Earless Dragon continue to decline
- community groups continue to collect data and undertake on the ground activities that directly improve the condition of the ACT's natural environment
- the adverse impact of pest plants and animals continues, accordingly a revised weeds strategy taking account of the new legislation and declared pest plants list has been prepared for the next 10 years (2007-17).



Community Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our community is important.

Indicators used to measure community wellbeing were:

- Community health
- Community participation
- Economy
- Education
- Health services
- Heritage
- Housing sustainability
- Noise
- Population trends
- Safety
- Socio-economic equity

Key Findings

- longest life expectancy (84.0 years for females and 79.9 years for males in 2005) and lowest death rates (6.0 per 1000 people in 2005) of all Australians
- just under half our adults consume the recommended intake of fruit, and only 10.3% consume the recommended serves of vegetables
- high disposable income (\$49, 934 compared to \$31, 061 nationally in 2006-07)
- lower rate of unemployment (2.5%) than the national average (4.3%)
- 12.9% drop in crime rates and 10% drop in and traffic collisions
- 13.8 % of citizens have a long-term mental health condition
- 14.3% of adults engaged in risky or high risk drinking in 2004-05 an increase of 3.3% since 2001
- on average, Canberrans are as healthy, wealthy and well educated as ever. The "average" Canberran enjoys the Territory's lower than national average unemployment and higher than national average income. We also continue to maintain higher levels of education than the rest of Australia
- however, we struggle to live and eat healthily; mental illness and alcohol and drug abuse are significant problems and despite a drop in crime rate between we feel less safe.