



**2020**

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT –  
ACT State of the Environment Report 2019**

**Presented by  
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## Introduction

The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's 8<sup>th</sup> ACT State of the Environment Report (SOE Report) was received by the Government on 19 December 2019.

The ACT State of the Environment report is a 4-yearly report. The 2019 SOE Report covers the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2019. It provides an independent assessment of the state and trends of the ACT's environment, the pressures on it and their impacts, the management initiatives that are in place to address environmental concerns, and the effectiveness of those initiatives.

For the 2019 report, the environmental assessments are based on 26 core indicators across seven themes (climate change, human settlements, air, land, biodiversity, water and fire) selected to address specific environmental issues. The 2019 report includes a dedicated chapter on Indigenous heritage and environmental issues and interests. This is the first time the ACT SOE Report has begun with such considerations.

Other dedicated chapters include acknowledgement and celebration of ACT community contribution to sustainability and environmental knowledge – the value of this work is significant with 'replacement value' estimated in the order of \$40–50 million per year – and the importance and status of Canberra's urban trees.

Drivers of environmental challenges and change in the ACT continue to be climate change, our ecological footprint, population growth and development pressures.

Key findings in the report include:

- The ACT's per capita ecological footprint is 5.24 hectares, which is comparable to the Australian average. The ACT's ecological footprint has decreased by 11% since 2009-10, but there remains room for improvement.
- The ACT's total carbon footprint has decreased by 20% since 2009-10, largely due to our transition to 100% renewable electricity.
- The report recognises our world-leading action on climate change but rates 'climate trends' and 'impacts of climate change' as 'poor', due to the worsening impacts of climate change being experienced in our region.
- While air quality is not typically a major issue locally, the report recommends improved air quality monitoring. Note that the data cut-off date for the report assessments was 30 June 2019.
- There remain challenges for protecting our biodiversity, including adoption of a sustainable funding model; implementation of efficient, effective data management architecture; understanding and managing the impacts of climate change on species and ecosystems; management of development pressures, Canberrans' ecological footprint, and the legacy of historic land management practices; and management and eradication of invasive species.

The Commissioner has provided 35 formal recommendations to assist the ACT Government to make strategic and practical decisions, and to undertake specific actions to improve environmental outcomes. The recommendations aim to focus ACT Government effort where it is likely to have the greatest impact including opportunities to integrate multiple

environmental outcomes into government policies and programs.

## Tabling of the SOE Report

In accordance with section 19(3) of the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* (the Act), the responsible Minister must, within six months after the day of receiving a SOE Report, present to the Legislative Assembly a statement that sets out the response of the Government to the report.

The SOE Report was tabled by the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability on 13 February 2020.

This document is the Government's response to the SOE Report as required by section 19(3) of the Act. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 public health emergency has affected Government business and operations, including the provision of this response to the Assembly.

## Recommendations

### OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	Establish a sustainable funding model for the conservation of biodiversity, environmental protection, water management, the reduction of fire risks, and citizen science initiatives to assist in the planning, prioritisation and acquittal of programs and works.
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	Establish data management architecture, especially for environmental issues, to address cross-portfolio communication needs.
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	Establish a mechanism to ensure the alignment of ACT ministerial arrangements and the promotion of information sharing on the basis that environmental issues are the concern of 'one government' and across portfolios.
<b>Recommendation 4</b>	Identify opportunities to improve collaboration with the NSW Government on cross-jurisdictional natural resource management. This should include participation in data collection programs and active management of natural resource management pressures.
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	Ensure community participation in the design of all new <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> strategic assessments and ensure that information flow about offsets, implementation plans, and programs is publicly accessible and understandable, regular, targeted, and subject to community and other consultation.

<b>Recommendation 6</b>	Lead collaborative networks where regional policy and operational matters require cross-jurisdictional cooperation.
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## INDIGENOUS MATTERS

<b>Recommendation 7</b>	<p>Continue consultation with Ngunnawal people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore the potential of developing a unified Framework for Cultural Indicators in respect of cultural water and cultural burning;</li> <li>• explore the management potential of an Indigenous Seasonal Calendar;</li> <li>• consider the establishment of an Indigenous River Rangers program; and</li> <li>• establish a specific category of Indigenous heritage grants.</li> </ul>
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## SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

<b>Recommendation 8</b>	Continue to explore the use of ‘deliberative democracy’ for environmental initiatives in accordance with the aspirations of the ACT Whole of Government Communications and Engagement Plan 2019 and in collaboration with the Climate Change Strategy 2019–25 Community Liaison Team.
<b>Recommendation 9</b>	Specifically provide for the recognition of citizen science and community environmental action with a targeted awards program.

## URBAN TREES

<b>Recommendation 10</b>	Advance Action 1 of the Canberra’s Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City (2019) by convening an environmental-economic accounts steering committee with representatives from government, academics and the community.
<b>Recommendation 11</b>	Continue to collaborate with other jurisdictions and research institutes to generate the evidence base for appropriate urban forest understorey and other plantings, having specific regard to climate change implications.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

<b>Recommendation 12</b>	Engage the community in consultation about and the design of the Social Cost of Carbon mechanism under consideration in the Climate Change Strategy 2019–25.
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	Investigate opportunities to increase carbon uptake and storage in natural ecosystems and urban environments.

<b>Recommendation 14</b>	Encourage and provide incentives for the development and uptake of distributed energy storage and microgrid technology in domestic, commercial, and government buildings and infrastructure.
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## HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

### Waste

<b>Recommendation 15</b>	Advance its contribution to adopting a circular economy in accordance with the National Waste Strategy.
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### Transport

<b>Recommendation 16</b>	Explore incentives to increase the uptake of public transport, car and ride sharing options, and active travel, including cycling amongst women and girls.
<b>Recommendation 17</b>	Consider implementing innovative community engagement programs which encourage active travel, including the establishment of car-free streets and car-free dates as a part of the ACT festival calendar.
<b>Recommendation 18</b>	Hasten the electrification of the ACT bus fleet.
<b>Recommendation 19</b>	Promote the use of digital technology applications to streamline the uptake of public transport options.

## AIR

<b>Recommendation 20</b>	Build on the incentives to encourage the replacement of wood heaters, specifically targeting the Tuggeranong Valley.
<b>Recommendation 21</b>	Increase the number of National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure compliance monitoring stations.
<b>Recommendation 22</b>	Urgently undertake an assessment of air pollutant emissions from diffuse sources to update the National Pollutant Inventory data (1999).
<b>Recommendation 23</b>	In collaboration with health professionals, improve knowledge of the impacts of air pollution on human health and the associated costs to the health system and economy.

## LAND

<b>Recommendation 24</b>	Improve knowledge on land use change in the ACT. This could be achieved through the development of annual land accounts using the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting framework.
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## BIODIVERSITY

<b>Recommendation 25</b>	Increase the protection of mature and hollow-bearing trees to maintain critical habitat and provide incentives for rural landholders to protect paddock trees.
<b>Recommendation 26</b>	Expand its communication strategy in respect of biodiversity and environmental issues and encourage ACT Government employees to make biodiversity reports available to the community in innovative ways.

## WATER

<b>Recommendation 27</b>	Institute a State of the Canberra Lakes reporting initiative, commencing in 2020.
<b>Recommendation 28</b>	Produce an annual recreational water quality report that includes monitoring results, investigations into the main sources of pollutants, recommended actions to improve water quality, and assessments of management effectiveness.
<b>Recommendation 29</b>	Establish a government reporting framework for the assessment of aquatic ecosystem health and water quality. This should incorporate work undertaken for the Catchment Health Indicator Program and produce public reports at appropriate intervals to provide meaningful assessments.
<b>Recommendation 30</b>	Ensure implementation plans are produced for the Molonglo River Reserve, Lower Cotter Catchment and Googong Foreshore management plans.
<b>Recommendation 31</b>	Provide incentives to increase wastewater recycling and the use of non-potable water by the community.
<b>Recommendation 32</b>	Identify opportunities to develop integrated water cycle management (as well as water-sensitive urban design) across new and existing urban areas, capturing and using stormwater and creating biodiversity habitat.
<b>Recommendation 33</b>	Review codes which relate to flooding and finalise the 2016 flood strategy and associated flood mapping.

## FIRE

<b>Recommendation 34</b>	Ensure tolerable fire intervals are considered in decision frameworks for prescribed burns.
<b>Recommendation 35</b>	Regularly evaluate and report publicly on the commitment to ecological and cultural burning and the outcome of these activities.

# ACT Government Response to the Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment Report – ACT State of the Environment - 2019

The Commissioner made 35 main recommendations which are listed below. The following summarises the Government Response to recommendations:

## OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

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

### **Government Response: Agreed**

The Government is committed to providing sustainable funding for important environmental initiatives such as conservation, fire management, and water management. Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, currently investigating several national and international investment models that could be used as a basis for developing a sustainable funding model for improved environmental management in the ACT.

- 2. Establish data management architecture, especially for environmental issues, to address cross-portfolio communication needs.***

### **Government Response: Agreed**

In line with the ACT Government's open government policy, a considerable amount of environmental data is publicly available on the ACTmapi web platform, within the ACT Geospatial Data Catalogue. Environmental data available on ACTmapi include data on vegetation, threatened species habitats, soils, hydrogeological landscapes, groundwater bores and heritage. Rainfall and streamflow data are also available on the ACT Government Open Data Portal, through a collaboration between ACT Healthy Waterways and the Office of the Chief Digital Officer.

To enhance cross-portfolio communication needs, EPSDD will set up data management architecture for environmental data, through establishing the appropriate schema, data dictionary and custodianship for managing and disseminating data.

A curated "enviro-portal" of datasets will be made available through the ACTmapi and/or ACT Government Open Data Portal so the community can learn more about the environment in a particular area, see the data used to make environmental and planning decisions, and access data for research and advisory purposes. This will expand opportunities for improved data integration to make more strategic and tactical contributions to policy and planning cycles as part of the overarching *ACT Wellbeing Framework* (i.e. beyond operational use of data). It will also enable near-real-time data capture and dissemination between government agencies.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

There are a variety of existing ways in which cross-portfolio information sharing is embedded into the process of developing policies and programs that require the consideration of environmental issues. Cabinet submissions require evidence of how environment issues have been considered and addressed, where relevant to the matter for decision.

Portfolio arrangements demonstrate alignment between development and infrastructure impacts and conservation outcomes – combining planning and the environment portfolio promotes sustainable development. Close working relationships between Directorates with portfolio cross-over enable early identification of environmental issues for consideration in policy, program and project delivery.

A recent and significant development is the *ACT Wellbeing Framework*, which further strengthens the “one government” approach to the environment by recognising the importance of:

- a healthy and resilient natural environment;
- connection to nature; and
- a climate resilient environment and community;

in a liveable city and thriving community.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

There are various collaborations on natural resource, water, environmental and fire management with NSW at project and program level, including:

- the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy 2016-46, Implementation Plan, and ongoing operation of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group which demonstrate the commitment of the ACT Government to improved catchment governance to protect the natural resources of the ACT and region;
- on water trading as per commitments under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan;
- ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) regularly partners with South East Local Land Services and the NSW Department of Primary Industries in the delivery of a range of NRM programs in the ACT, including Australian Government/ACT Government funded National Landcare Program projects;
- Australian Alps Liaison Committee – coordinated research and management programs with ACT, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania in relation to the management of the Australian Alpine Parks;
- cross-border fire management planning and operations;

- cross-border pest animal and invasive plant surveillance and control programs;
- cross-border biosecurity action planning; and
- the Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch program which engages community volunteers to undertake water quality monitoring in the ACT and region.

In 2020, the ACT and NSW Governments renewed the ACT-NSW Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Regional Collaboration (first signed in 2011 and re-committed to in 2016). The renewed MoU continues to promote a regional approach to environmental issues, including on natural resource management.

The ACT Government will continue to identify new cross border collaborative opportunities based on a continuous improvement model.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

EPSDD will continue to raise awareness of engagements around EPBC matters and around information identified during EPBC assessments, offsets assessments, and other projects and programs. Different communication channels will be used to encourage a variety of audiences to participate, including appropriate whole-of-government channels and directorate channels.

In the ACT, strategic assessments have been undertaken to support and approve urban expansion (i.e. greenfield areas). The next area after Eastern Broadacre that may be considered for a new strategic assessment is the Western edge investigation area, which forms part of the implementation of the ACT Planning Strategy (Action No. 1.2.1). However, at this stage, only preliminary background investigations are being undertaken. If a strategic assessment is to be progressed, the agreement and terms of reference for the strategic assessment are appropriately a matter between the ACT Government and the Commonwealth. Once signed, the agreement is published. Notwithstanding, community consultations on the draft strategic assessment documents are required under the EPBC Act.

Each endorsed strategic assessment includes requirements for monitoring and auditing, as part of the proponent's commitments, and for those initiated by the ACT Government, are published together with other information on the EPSDD website.

The ACT Offsets Register publishes online all ratified Commonwealth approvals, Offset Management Plans, Matters of National Environmental Significance management plans, Annual Compliance Reports and Strategic Assessment Annual Reports. Monitoring reports indicating site condition will be published as soon as possible.

The EPBC Act is currently being independently reviewed by Professor Graeme Samuel AC (supported by an expert panel). The review's final report is due in October 2020. The recommendations of the review, including any amendments made to the EPBC Act, may impact the design process of all new EPBC strategic assessments.

The ACT Government made a submission to the review process. The submission noted a range of issues that the review should consider, including:

- that climate change should be recognised as a key factor in the assessment triggers for matters of national significance under the EPBC Act
- the EPBC should cover impacts that link public health protection to environmental regulation, recognising that there will be potentially higher pollution levels in the future
- that outcomes under the EPBC Act should have a greater focus on Aboriginal heritage value, and there should be greater engagement with the Aboriginal community to foster this proposal.

The ACT Government submission will be published on the EPBC Act review website at: <https://epbcactreview.environment.gov.au/submissions>.

**6. *Lead collaborative networks where regional policy and operational matters require cross-jurisdictional cooperation.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

Recommendation four and this recommendation seek to achieve greater coordination and cooperation between jurisdictions. Significant work is already occurring and will be built on in response to these two recommendations.

The MoU will support continued collaboration between the ACT and NSW on operational matters that require cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

The ACT is also an associate member of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO), which provides a forum for councils, NSW and ACT Government agencies and other stakeholders to work together at a regional level on shared priorities and opportunities. The Memorandum of Understanding between the ACT Government and the CRJO was last recommitted to in 2018.

The ACT Government plays a lead role in ensuring Australian Alps National Parks are managed cooperatively. The Australian Alps National Parks include national parks and nature reserves across Victoria, NSW and the ACT including Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. This partnership encourages cross-jurisdictional collaboration in relation to policy and operational matters for the management of natural and cultural values and recreation and tourism opportunities.

The ACT Government also has a significant role in regional biosecurity, including through cross-jurisdictional cooperation. In 2019, an ACT Biosecurity Risk Workshop was held in Canberra and included a wide range of participants from the Australian and NSW governments and from across ACT Government Directorates. EPSDD has extensive representation, liaison and advisory input to cross-jurisdictional committees regarding primary industries, animal welfare, biosecurity risks (e.g. African Swine Fever, Hendra virus, COVID-19) and biocontrol planning (e.g. invasive plant species). The ACT Biosecurity Strategy 2016-26 recognises the location of the ACT within NSW, hence its goals and outcomes are closely aligned with those of NSW.

## INDIGENOUS MATTERS

7. ***Continue consultation with Ngunnawal people to:***
- ***explore the potential of developing a unified Framework for Cultural Indicators in respect of cultural water and cultural burning;***
  - ***explore the management potential of an Indigenous Seasonal Calendar;***
  - ***consider the establishment of an Indigenous River Rangers program; and***
  - ***establish a specific category of Indigenous heritage grants.***

### **Government Response: Agreed**

This recommendation is in line with the EPSDD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028 Action Plan. A key action of the Plan under the focus area of community leadership is to initiate programs with the Ngunnawal people to value their traditional knowledge and build capacity in the delivery of fire management, water management, natural resource management, wildlife management, traditional ecological knowledge and language initiatives.

During 2019-20, there has been considerable consultation between the EPSDD and Ngunnawal people through the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee. This has included regarding development of (initiated in 2014) and recent agreement to the ACT's revised Water Resource Plan – Part 14 as part of progressing accreditation of groundwater and surface water planning for the ACT under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Also, from late-2015 to early-2020, collaborative implementation of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment tool has provided good opportunities for the Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians to work together on Country along with other Traditional Owner groups to collect detailed information about cultural values at various waterway sites in the ACT.

The Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee represents an appropriate forum for consideration of cultural indicators, an Aboriginal Seasonal Calendar, the role of an Indigenous Rangers program, an Aboriginal Water Forum, cultural flows, and other issues of concern.

Regarding a specific category of Indigenous heritage grants, a specific Aboriginal heritage priority (category) already exists within the ACT Heritage Grant Program. The category is: 'Aboriginal projects initiated by or involving the local Aboriginal community in local heritage activities'.

The ACT Government acknowledges the unique and distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and this is reflected in section 27(2) of the *Human Rights Act 2004*

## SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

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

### **Government Response: Agreed**

Deliberative democracy is a powerful tool when used appropriately and where the community can make a significant input to policy and programs. EPSDD successfully used this tool for the Housing Choices engagement.

EPSDD will continue to seek to identify suitable opportunities where the deliberative democracy process will be the appropriate tool to gain community engagement and feedback. This work will be guided by the ACT Whole of Government Communications and Engagement Plan 2019 and will include discussions with the CMTEDD's Whole of Government Communications team and Community Engagement Peer Advice Panel.

Further, it is noted that Goal 1A of the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025 commits the ACT Government to encourage community-driven solutions to climate change.

- 9. *Specifically provide for the recognition of citizen science and community environmental action with a targeted awards program.***

### **Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT Government is committed through the ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-23 to strengthening community engagement. The EPSDD is directly supporting citizen science by enabling tools and applications for example Weed Spotter, Canberra Nature Map (CNM). These tools enable citizen scientists to record the location of new weed incursions, established weed populations and locations of native species including threatened, rare and previously unrecorded species.

Since 2014, CNM has enabled 2472 individuals and community groups to provide the ACT Government with 1,190,000 records of 5388 species. It is supported by a team of 150 volunteers who between them provide thousands of hours each year in species identification and site administration. The CNM volunteers include some of the leading Australian authorities in their field and most are based locally. They include representatives from 25 local wildlife or landcare groups.

The ACT Landcare Awards is a biennial event run by Landcare ACT with support from Landcare Australia and the ACT Government. The awards celebrate citizen scientists and community environmental action. In 2019, the awards recognised the efforts and achievements of various Landcarers, ParkCarers, community volunteers, and farmers, including the volunteer developer of NatureMapr, Aaron Clausen, with a Citizen Science Award. Frogwatch and Waterwatch are other well-known citizen science programs in the ACT that engage hundreds of volunteers annually in monitoring, research and community education.

The Frogwatch Program was recognised for its outstanding achievements by the ACT Government with a 2015 Citizen Science Award and a 2017 Environment Community Award, while the Waterwatch program won the 2017 Citizen Science Award.

EPSDD is currently developing guidelines for environmental volunteering. Reward and recognition is a critical feature of volunteer retention and an important way to thank the many committed individuals helping to make the ACT a better place. The new guidelines will have volunteer reward and recognition as a key aspect of volunteer programs going forward.

EPSDD is also in the process of reviewing the categories of our current business sustainability awards program.

## **URBAN TREES**

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

### **Government Response: Agree in Principle**

Through the Inter-jurisdictional Steering Committee (IJSC) for the National Environmental Economic Accounting Strategy, the ACT Government continues to explore opportunities for environmental economic accounting, with a focus on urban living infrastructure.

The IJSC is open to consideration of co-investment and collaboration opportunities, and ACT in collaboration with Victoria and NSW currently has a proposal under consideration by the IJSC to form a working group to investigate urban ecosystem accounting.

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

### **Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT Government will continue to collaborate with other jurisdictions and with experts and research institutions to develop an evidence base and policies relating to the urban forest and climate change. An example of a recent collaboration is the Urban Tree Species report, which identified the best tree species to improve Canberra's urban tree canopy and adapt to rising temperatures. The report was commissioned by the ACT Government and undertaken by the ANU Fenner School of Research.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

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

#### **Government Response: Agreed**

The 'social cost of carbon' is an estimate of the actual economic, social and environmental cost of emitting greenhouse gases, measured in dollars per tonne of carbon pollution. While research has been done globally on determining a price, there is an opportunity to engage the local community in discussion about the social cost of carbon. The social cost of carbon is not a commonly known or understood term and there is an opportunity to increase understanding of this important concept and promote climate action with the community.

The ACT Government will consider approaches for community consultation in the development of a Social Cost of Carbon mechanism, noting that its development is undertaken by an independent body and does not come into place until 2025.

Engagement could be guided by the relevant ACT Whole of Government Communications and Engagement Plan and include collaboration between the Directorate and any external consultants.

Engagement could:

- increase understanding in the community of the wide-ranging effects and societal costs of carbon pollution;
- reinforce the importance of reducing emissions;
- encourage the community to take action to reduce emissions; and
- lead to the development of an ACT-specific mechanism to determine the social cost of carbon that reflects what is important to the community and helps the community take ownership of emissions.

### **13. *Investigate opportunities to increase carbon uptake and storage in natural ecosystems and urban environments.***

#### **Government Response: Agreed**

Priorities in the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025 include to "Identify and enable opportunities for carbon sequestration in trees and soils and for adaptation innovation", and to "Encourage sustainable farming practices which are fit for the current and future climate and enhance soil and water quality, and work with farmers to identify opportunities for net zero emissions farming and innovation to increase resilience."

In 2017-19, EPSDD conducted soil testing programs on ACT farms to understand soil health and to use this farm specific soil data to inform management to increase Total Soil Carbon and increase soil pH. Under the National Landcare Program 2, ACT NRM has been specifically funded under its Better Land Management program to achieve demonstrable improvements in soil health including improvements in Total Organic Carbon, ground cover and increases in soil pH (thereby reducing soil acidity) on ACT farms. To date, ACT NRM has partnered with South East Local Land Services to run workshops across ACT and south-east

NSW to communicate best practice soil management and the role of organic carbon in soil management.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT Government currently provides targeted policy and program initiatives, such as the Next Generation Energy Storage Program, to support the uptake of distributed energy resources in the ACT. Establishing the ACT as a 'living laboratory', including how to enable innovative ideas, business models and technology such as distributed energy storage and microgrid technologies, has been considered during the development of the Sustainable Energy Policy 2020-25, which will likely be released later this year.

## **HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

### **Waste**

**15. *Advance its contribution to adopting a circular economy in accordance with the National Waste Strategy.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT is committed to delivering on the National Waste Policy and Action Plan 2019, with a primary focus on waste as a resource within a circular economy. The ACT is taking key circular economy actions by improving resource recovery through improvements to the Hume Materials Recovery Facility. TCCS is also looking to establish a Recycled Materials Working Group to increase the use of recycled material in infrastructure.

At whole-of-government level, the ACT's new Wellbeing Framework embeds the circular economy through the Environment and Climate domain, with its "climate resilient environment and community" indicator. This indicator encompasses waste alongside other critical circular economy measures, such as greenhouse gas emissions. A proposal to report the waste indicator as the ratio of per capita gross domestic product to total waste generation is being reflected in a national project to develop circular economy indicators.

At directorate level, circular economy principles are embedded in the Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025, the Waste Feasibility Study 2018, and in work that is underway to phase out of single-use plastics. Related documents such as the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-25, the ACT Waste-to-Energy Policy 2020-25, and plans to deliver a Food Organics and Green Organics service combine with Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City to discourage waste and promote and support maintenance of natural systems in the Territory.

TCCS is regularly engaging with the OCSE on circular economy matters. This includes support for Office issues papers and events related to the circular economy. TCCS will continue engagement towards establishing a clear circular economy governance structure for the ACT

into the future. TCCS also collaborated with the Canberra Institute of Technology in actively supporting a 2020 'Trade Hack' event which tackled waste in trades.

## Transport

### **16. *Explore incentives to increase the uptake of public transport, car and ride sharing options, and active travel, including cycling amongst women and girls.***

#### **Government Response: Agreed**

Increasing the use of sustainable transport modes, such as public transport and active travel, is an important policy goal of the Government.

Priorities in the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-25 include to "Support higher uptake of public transport by continuing to improve services to meet community travel needs", to "Trial new ways of using roads that most efficiently move people and goods and better support sustainable transport modes," to "Encourage active travel by continuing to improve cycle paths and walkability", and to "plan for a compact and efficient city to improve access to public transport and active travel options, reduce travel distances and reliance on private car use." The Government will continue to explore a range of actions and incentives to implement these priorities, and increase the uptake of public transport, car and ride sharing, and active travel.

The ACT Government continues to develop the Transport Strategy that supports the long-term shift of transport modes towards walking, cycling and public transport. Concurrently, we are reviewing the related Active Travel Framework. Both of these are consistent with the planning, climate change and preventive health strategies. These all work together towards a compact urban form with more options to work and recreate closer to where people live while providing incentives for people to reduce private vehicle dependence where possible.

The ACT continues to use a range of options to increase public transport uptake and reduce access barriers, including free off-peak travel periods, better stop and station infrastructure and interchange facilities, simplified timetabling, route classification and passenger information services, expanded park and ride facilities, improved lighting, integrated ticketing between public transport modes, as well as marketing aimed at attracting more users, more often.

The ACT ran a successful trial of car share between 2016 and 2018. Building on the results of this trial, the ACT is working with car share operators to facilitate expansion in the ACT.

Within the compact form, the ACT Government is improving the performance of Canberra's extensive active travel network to make walking and cycling safer, more convenient and comfortable. The 2018-19 ACT Budget included \$21.7 million for priority active travel infrastructure improvements over three years. These include:

- projects to improve walking and cycling in town centres such as Tuggeranong Town Centre, active travel improvements, Belconnen Bikeway and the Woden Cycle Loop; and

- cycling network improvements, such as building missing links, installing priority crossings, and the development of an integrated wayfinding strategy including maps, signage and the Transport Canberra Journey Planner.

A detailed evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the ACT's reforms to the on-demand transport industry was undertaken in 2018 to help guide the ACT Government response to the changes in that industry. The ACT Government continues to review the on-demand transport market (including taxis and rideshare) to ensure greater consumer choice, accessibility, safety, industry viability, sustainability and long-term competitiveness.

Increasing participation in cycling, walking and running will help achieve objectives in the areas of public health, sustainable transport and the environment. One example includes minimum passing distances, which were introduced in 2015 to protect cyclists on our roads. Installation of signage will soon commence across the ACT road network to remind motorists of the relevant distance required when overtaking a cyclist in those speed zones. These signs will be put up in stages at specific sites where there is anticipated high cycling traffic, and in areas of lower compliance rates with passing distance laws, before the Spring 2020 cycling season.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT Government has identified that active forms of transport, such as walking and cycling, can deliver benefits across a number of policy areas including transport choice, mental and physical health, environment, recreation and economic development.

The ACT Government is continuously exploring opportunities for innovative programs to further encourage active forms of transport. Some examples include:

- The Active Travel Office (ATO) undertakes community engagement activities to raise the profile of active travel such as Canberra Walk and Ride Week and Women's Health Week (with an emphasis on increasing cycling participation for women and girls) and attends community events to increase the reach of audiences. Actsmart programs, in close collaboration with the ATO, are beginning to incorporate transport choices into their outreach programs.
- Our award-winning School Safety Program delivers a number of initiatives to encourage and support walking, riding and scooting to and from school. The programs include the Ride or Walk to School and It's Your Move Safe Cycle programs, which educate and upskill teachers and students in bike riding skills, the Active Streets for Schools program, which delivers infrastructure improvements around schools and the School Crossing Supervisor program, which provides supervisors at busy road crossings to assist children to safely cross. These initiatives combine to provide comprehensive support in and around schools to allow more children to walk or ride to school.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/on-demand-transport-reform/evaluation>

- Workplace travel is the largest area of travel for ACT residents. The ACT Government is finalising the End-of-Trip Facilities General Code to encourage improved bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities in commercial developments, including workplaces as well as developing a guide for workplace travel planning.

While being a challenging time, the current COVID-19 emergency has provided an opportunity for the ACT and Australian Governments to bring forward investments in active travel infrastructure. These rapid interventions were targeted initially to protect against transmission but also to support and sustain the surge of interest in walking and cycling for transport and health. Below are some of the highlights of a suite of initiatives undertaken by the ACT Government with a particular focus on active forms of transport:

- promoting the Slower Streets and Clockwise is COVID-wise campaigns in concert with the community to better share roads and paths for people who choose to walk and cycle;
- re-programming the pedestrian call buttons in the CBD to have an automatic pedestrian cycle;
- repurposing and reallocation of road spaces with parking to support inclusion of bike lanes in active travel infrastructure projects;
- allocation of funding for active travel infrastructure in the COVID-19 stimulus package; and
- championing a discussion at the 13th Transport and Infrastructure Council meeting on a process for developing a longer-term national strategy to encourage public transport use following recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Australia.

The ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025 also outlines a number of actions to reduce car use, including:

3.12 Trial and evaluate innovative approaches to planning and development that prioritise active travel and public transport.

3.13 Implement car free days and consider car free areas, shared zones and traffic calmed streets. Car free days are temporary events held in specific locations. Similar to existing events like the Multicultural Festival and Enlighten, entertainment or market stalls could be set up in a limited public area to allow people to enjoy the public space in a different way for a short period of time.

3.14 Support car share schemes and transport-on-demand solutions across the ACT region.

3.15 Investigate and implement options for encouraging a shift to public transport and active travel through planning and a smarter approach to parking.

EPSDD and TCCS will work together to implement these actions as outlined in the strategy.

## **18. *Hasten the electrification of the ACT bus fleet.***

### **Government Response: Agree in Principle**

As outlined in the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025, the ACT Government is aiming to achieve a zero emissions bus fleet by 2040, by progressively phasing zero emissions buses into the fleet to provide clean and sustainable transport for the community. Transport

Canberra is currently preparing a zero-emission transition plan to transition its current diesel and CNG bus fleet to zero-emissions. The Plan will act as a road map for the transition and considers a range of existing and future zero-emission fuel technologies to achieve this objective including hydrogen and electric. Transport Canberra has one electric vehicle in service following a trial of two electric vehicles over 2018-19. The Government will consider options for potentially hastening the transition as technology and markets evolve.

**19. *Promote the use of digital technology applications to streamline the uptake of public transport options.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT continues to promote its MyWay ticketing system as well as third party platforms to access service information. Passenger information at stops has been upgraded to digital at key locations and the ACT continues to pursue options for account-based ticketing solutions that spread a variety of technology platforms.

**AIR**

**20. *Build on the incentives to encourage the replacement of wood heaters, specifically targeting the Tuggeranong Valley.***

**Government Response: Agree in principle**

The Government recognises air quality issues related to smoke from wood heaters, particularly in the Tuggeranong Valley. Actsmart administers a Wood Heater Replacement Program to support householders to replace wood heaters with energy efficient electric heating options. The Government will consider potential further options to support the replacement of wood heaters with less polluting options.

**21. *Increase the number of National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure compliance monitoring stations.***

**Government Response: Agree in principle**

The ACT Government recognises the importance of air quality monitoring, and notes in particular the importance of accurate and timely monitoring during events such as the bushfire smoke pollution that occurred during the 2019-20 Summer. The Government is currently developing an air quality strategy, taking into account the lessons from the 2019-20 Summer, and it is expected to make further recommendations in this area.

The ACT Government has been undertaking ambient air quality monitoring in Canberra since the early 1990s. The AAQ NEPM monitoring network in the ACT currently consists of two NEPM monitoring stations at Monash and Florey and an additional monitoring station in Civic. The ACT monitors four of the six NEPM pollutants:

- carbon monoxide (CO);

- nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>);
- photochemical oxidants as ozone (O<sub>3</sub>); and
- particulate matter (particles less than 10 microns in diameter – PM10 and particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter – PM2.5).

Due to a lack of heavy industry, the ACT has never monitored sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) as it is primarily an industrial pollutant, and lead monitoring ceased in 2002 with the phase out of leaded petrol.

Monitoring results in 2018 demonstrated that Canberra's air quality is generally excellent, with no exceedances of the AAQ NEPM standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and particles as PM10. The major impacts on Canberra's air quality in 2019 came from the accumulation of combustion particles from dust, hazard reduction burns and wood heaters.

Canberra is a large relatively spread out city with several different topographical regions. The Government agrees there would be a benefit of increasing environmental monitoring for particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5). Increasing the monitoring of other pollutants would be costly and is unlikely to provide any benefit to the community at this time.

The NEPM standard does not require a third performance monitoring station until the population is over 1 million people. An alternative could be to expand the network with several smaller stations around the region that only monitor particulate matter. Several PM monitors dispersed across Canberra would enable comparison of the impacts of bushfire smoke, smoke from woodfire heaters and dust from activities such as construction, in different regions of the ACT. These issues will be further considered through the development of the air quality strategy.

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

**Government Response: Not agreed**

There is limited benefit in undertaking a diffuse source emissions inventory in the ACT due to the lack of industry in the ACT.

The ACT air quality monitoring clearly indicates that emissions from diffuse sources are not a significant contributor to pollution in the ACT with pollutants associated with these sources well below the ambient air quality standards.

Particulate pollution from wood heaters, hazard reduction burns and dust remain the primary sources of air pollution in the ACT. This will be reconsidered if at any time industries, or other relevant sources, develop in the ACT that would contribute to additional emissions.

- 23. *In collaboration with health professionals, improve knowledge of the impacts of air pollution on human health and the associated costs to the health system and economy.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

It is important to build the current knowledge on air pollution and the associated impacts on human health and the economy. The ACT Health Directorate prioritises quality research in these areas and participates in research opportunities in line with available resources. The ACT Health Directorate, in consultation with the EPA and the EPSDD, engaged the Centre for Air Pollution, a cooperative research centre funded by the National Health and Medical Research Centre, to undertake more detailed research into the health impacts and costs associated with particulate pollution in the ACT. This work will inform future policy direction.

## **LAND**

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

The EPSDD is a member of the Inter-jurisdictional Steering Committee (IJSC) for the National Environmental Economic Accounting Strategy, and is seeking to explore opportunities for environmental economic accounting as a means of monitoring and planning for land use change in the ACT. The initial focus is on urban living infrastructure as part of Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City, Action 1 to expand the existing asset management system. A proposal is currently under consideration by the IJSC to form a working group as a collaboration between the ACT, Victoria and NSW to investigate urban ecosystem accounting. Other opportunities for landscape-level assessments and input into land use planning are being explored.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

Following an assessment and recommendation by the ACT Scientific Committee, the 'Loss of Mature Native Trees (including hollow-bearing trees) and a Lack of Recruitment' was listed in 2018 as a Key Threatening Process by the Minister for the Environment. A threat abatement plan is currently under development, with detailed measures on what actions can be implemented to provide greater protection for mature trees. The threat abatement

plan recognises that the costs of improving tree recruitment in agricultural landscapes can be significant and will outline actions to assist rural landholders to protect paddock trees.

Further protection of mature native trees is provided under the 2019 ACT Native Woodland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans. The Strategy identifies conservation objectives to protect, maintain and improve native woodlands, while prioritising effective collaboration with stakeholders, including rural landholders.

EPSDD is undertaking two specific programs to improve the retention of mature and hollow-bearing trees within the ACT. The first is the National Landcare Program funded Protecting and connecting endangered woodlands in the ACT that works with rural leaseholders to protect and restore engaged woodlands on rural lands. The second program is working with the Australian National University and Transport Canberra and City Services to trial different management techniques designed to protect mature trees in the urban environment. The program will monitor a range of different management actions designed to protect mature trees to determine the environmental benefits as well as the costs associated with the different management actions.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

EPSDD currently has a range of outlets to publicise issues around biodiversity and the environment. Most major strategies and reports are published on the EPSDD website, often with a plain English summary document. Where community engagement occurs through the ACT Government's engagement platform, [YourSay.act.gov.au](https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au), the final reports and summaries are also published on that platform.

EPSDD has prepared short videos on key topics such as macropod management and filmed live events such as some forums. However, there is the opportunity to utilise more innovative methods for making these reports, or summaries of these reports more accessible, particularly using video technology.



Image link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYqJlbyqhZY&feature=youtu.be>

## WATER

### **27. *Institute a State of the Canberra Lakes reporting initiative, commencing in 2020.***

#### **Government Response: Agree in principle**

Substantial work has been undertaken and continues to be delivered as part of the Healthy Waterways Project and related investments. This project involves several initiatives to improve the water quality in ACT and region waterways:

- i. Construction of 20 water quality assets—raingardens, wetlands retention ponds, and channel restorations—that will filter, on average, 1900 tons of sediments, 14 tons of nitrogen and 2.4 tons of phosphorus from stormwater drainage every year.
- ii. A pilot public education program aimed at householders and the construction industry to reduce the amount of pollution entering the region’s waterways.
- iii. A program of waterway monitoring, data provision, and decision-support modelling to underpin evidence-based management of the region’s waterways by the ACT Government and other stakeholders. This work includes *Waterwatch*, an extensive community-based waterway monitoring program.
- iv. A program of research into the cause of algal blooms in Lake Tuggeranong and potential options for mitigating these.
- v. An initiative to coordinate the management of water resources among the 11 government and non-government agencies/organisations in the region whose operations have a material impact on water quality.

The ACT Government has also provided additional investment in 2019-20 in water quality assets, public education aimed at curbing waterway pollution, urban waterway stewardship, algal bloom research and the Waterwatch monitoring program.

As part of healthy waterways initiative described above priorities for urban waterway restoration have been identified and have informed the Draft Urban Forest Strategy and Canberra’s Living Infrastructure Plan.

Further to the extensive research and work being undertaken, it is understood that the Commissioner for the Sustainability and the Environment is considering undertaking a review. This would follow on from a report completed in 2012 by the former Commissioner which investigated the state of watercourses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin.

Should any review commence, the ACT Government will assist the Commissioner and provide information relevant to the scope and timing of the Commissioner’s work.

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

#### **Government Response: Agree in principle**

EPSSD, as part of the ACT Healthy Waterways project, is investigating the provision of ‘real time’ access to water quantity and quality and other related water monitoring data and dashboards in partnership with the ACT Government Data Lake initiative.

Real time information on recreational water quality will be provided on NCA and ACT Government websites, with additional public access to data and information through third party apps such as Swim Guide.

Access to water quantity and quality data could be supplemented with key performance indicators including the frequency and duration (number of days) of lake closures due to blue green algae, bacteria levels and any other reasons. Input on fish stocking activities could be included from NCA and EPSDD Conservation Research data.

Within the ACT Health Directorate, the ACT Government Analytical Laboratory's Microbiology Unit analyses water samples from 17 recreational swimming sites. This sampling is done weekly during the Recreational Swimming Season in accordance with the ACT Guidelines for Recreational Water Quality. Water quality assessment data is provided using intestinal enterococci as the indicator organism. This data could be included in reporting.

See response to recommendation 29 for information on annual reporting by the EPSDD.

#### Note

The NCA is responsible for all aspects of Lake Burley Griffin, with the ACT Government responsible for Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra. ACT Government officers in the EPA and TCCS staff monitor Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra (in addition to the Molonglo Reach and Murrumbidgee River Corridor) weekly during the main swimming season for both blue-green algae and microbial pathogens. Lake Tuggeranong, Lake Ginninderra and Molonglo Reach are monitored year-round for blue-green algae.

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

#### **Government Response: Agree in principle**

The ACT Water Strategy includes a commitment to report on progress against a number of targets including to maintain or improve the quality of water across all ACT-managed sub-catchments (30-year target), and to improve catchment health in sub-catchments that receive funding for on-ground works through the ACT Healthy Waterways Project (10-year target). Progress will be reported annually through the EPSDD annual report, with more comprehensive and longer term assessments (ACT Water Report) undertaken to support the review and development of the Strategy's five year implementation plans.

The Waterwatch annual report card, called the Catchment Health Indicator Program (CHIP), is based upon the data collected by volunteers throughout the preceding year. The purpose of the report is to give the community a better understanding of water quality and riparian health issues in the catchment as well as providing an ongoing baseline assessment of catchment health, to assist natural resource managers and policy-makers in addressing some of these issues. The CHIP is recognised in the ACT Water Strategy 2014-44 as a way to 'enhance knowledge and spatial planning for water and catchment management'.

**30. *Ensure implementation plans are produced for the Molonglo River Reserve, Lower Cotter Catchment and Googong Foreshore management plans.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

An implementation plan has been prepared for the Lower Cotter Catchment.

An implementation plan will be prepared for Molonglo River Reserve and for Googong Foreshores when the management plan is finalised.

**31. *Provide incentives to increase wastewater recycling and the use of non-potable water by the community.***

**Government Response: Agreed in principle**

EPSDD is investigating, as part of the ACT-led Murray-Darling Basin Water Efficiency Project, options to improve water efficiency within the Territory.

The Australian Government's Murray-Darling Basin Water Efficiency Program provides funding for water efficiency measures in exchange for entitlements for environmental water.

Technical feasibility studies identifying water efficiency measures that could be achieved across four efficiency themes are being progressed. The themes are water sensitive urban design, stormwater harvesting, infrastructure renewal and demand management. Final reports have been received for all except the demand management study.

The outcomes of these studies along with socio-economic modelling will identify water efficiency measures that will be considered for implementation. The Institute of Sustainable Futures has been engaged to develop conservation supply curves that prioritise measures relative to cost, water saving and assessment of additional benefits including social benefits such as urban cooling and greening, and/or environmental benefits such as water quality improvements, energy savings and reduced emissions.

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

**Government Response: Agreed**

EPSDD is investigating, as part of the ACT-led Murray-Darling Basin Water Efficiency Project, diversification of water supply options.

The Australian Government's Murray-Darling Basin Water Efficiency Program provides funding for water efficiency measures in exchange for entitlements for environmental water.

Initial investigations have focused on identifying a pathway to developing a diversification of supply strategy including several localised integrated water management plans based (in part) on mapping the existing infrastructure constraints and the range of water and land management opportunities that exist across the ACT.

**33. *Review codes which relate to flooding and finalise the 2016 flood strategy and associated flood mapping.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

The ACT flood mapping for the revised 1% Annual Exceedance Probability was finalised and publicly released on the EPSDD's ACTmapi site in November 2018.

The flood strategy (Strategic Flood Risk Management Plan) is being managed by the ACT Flood Committee, coordinated through the ESA Commissioner. The document is currently in draft.

A review of the Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) code, released in August 2014, recommends significantly expanding the current WSUD measures. The review reiterates the importance of WSUD in our environment to manage our urban water cycle, improve water quality and mitigate flooding.

**Note**

In 2019, the Australian Rainfall and Runoff (ARR) guidelines were reviewed, revised and re-released. ARR is a national guideline document used for the estimation of design flood characteristics. The ACT should now refer to these revised guidelines to update flood mapping across the Territory to ensure improved accuracy of flood information within the ACT and conformity across jurisdictions.

**FIRE**

**34. *Ensure tolerable fire intervals are considered in decision frameworks for prescribed burns.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

Planning for prescribed burning across the ACT is undertaken in a strategic manner through the Regional Fire Management Plans. These plans look across the whole landscape on a 10-year timeframe and identify priority areas for fuel management based on the impact on risk levels. Ecosystem values, including tolerable fire intervals, extent of vegetation type, and water catchment, and cultural and heritage values are all considered in the planning that identifies agreed areas for treatment.

**35. *Regularly evaluate and report publicly on the commitment to ecological and cultural burning and the outcomes of these activities.***

**Government Response: Agreed**

In the ACT, all prescribed burns are undertaken to meet multiple objectives of fuel reduction, ecological outcomes and cultural outcomes. All burns meet these objectives to differing degrees and the annual Bush Fire Operations Plan (BOP) clearly identifies burns where the dominant objective is to achieve either fuel reduction, cultural outcomes or ecological outcomes. The BOP is approved by the Commissioner of the ACT ESA and is subject to extensive internal and external audits. It has a rigorous, detailed and regular

process of reporting (to the ESA and the Minister) and auditing, with final results being publicly available in the annual report and on the ESA website.