2025–2026

Annual Report

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

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Cover image: *Casuarina flower.* Source: OCSE

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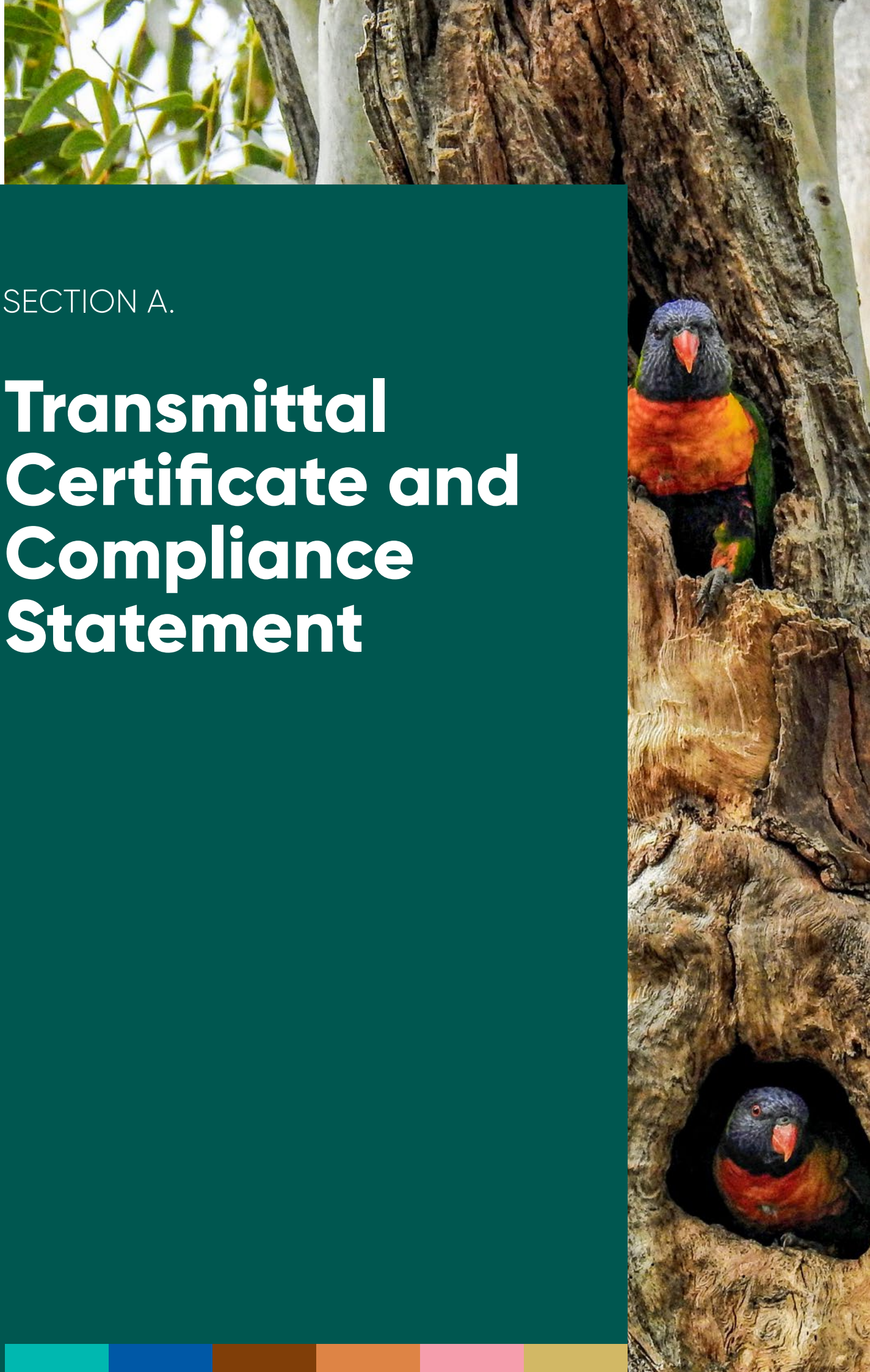
The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Artwork at Gubur Dhaura. Source: Richie Southerton

List of Acronyms

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTPS	Australian Capital Territory Public Service
ASO	Administrative Service Officer
BAU	Business as usual
CBEI	Consumption-Based Emissions Inventory
CED	City and Environment Directorate
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
DNCCC	Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee
EA	The Environmental Authorisation
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
EPSDD	Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
FOI	Freedom of Information
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FY	Financial Year
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPT	Gross Pollutant Trap
HCSD	Health and Community Services Directorate
NatHERS	Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme
NCA	National Capital Authority
NCN	Nature Conservation Network
NCC	National Construction Code
NNTC	National Native Title Council
NSW	New South Wales
OCSE	Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
QSTP	Queanbeyan Sewerage Treatment Plant
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessments
RUMR	Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River program
SLA	Suburban Land Agency
SoER	State of the Environment Report
SOG	Senior Officer Grade
TCCS	Transport Canberra and City Services
WPM	Water Planning and Management
WSUD	Water Sensitive Urban Design



SECTION A.

Transmittal Certificate and Compliance Statement

A1. Transmittal Certificate

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA
Minister for the Environment
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister

2025-26 Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report

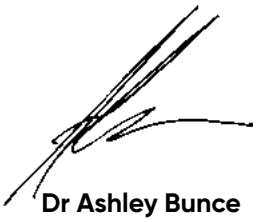
This report has been prepared in accordance with section 7(2) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and in accordance with the requirements under the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Directions 2026*. This report also meets the requirements of sections 14B and 20 of the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*.

I certify that the information in the attached report and information provided for whole of government reporting is an honest and accurate account, and that all material information on the operations of the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment has been included for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

I hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with the *Public Sector Management Standards 2006* (repealed), Part 2.3 (see section 113, Public Sector Management Standards 2016).

Section 13 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* requires that you present the report to the Legislative Assembly within 15 weeks after the end of the reporting year.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ashley Bunce
Commissioner for Sustainability
and the Environment

31 August 2026

A2. Compliance Statement

The 2025–26 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report must comply with the Annual Report Directions (the Directions) under section 8 of the Annual Reports Act. The Directions are found on the ACT Legislation Register: **www.legislation.act.gov.au**.

The Compliance Statement indicates the subsections, under Parts 1 to 5 of the Directions, that are applicable to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and the location of information that satisfies these requirements:

Part 1 Directions Overview

The requirements under Part 1 of the Directions relate to the purpose, timing and distribution, and record keeping of annual reports. The 2025–26 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report complies with all subsections of Part 1 under the Directions.

To meet section 15 Feedback, Part 1 of the Directions, contact details for the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment are provided within the 2025–26 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report to provide readers with the opportunity to provide feedback.

Part 2 Directorate and Public Sector Body Annual Report Requirements

The requirements within Part 2 of the Directions are mandatory for all reporting entities and the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment complies with all subsections. The information that satisfies the requirements of Part 2 is found in the 2025–26 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report as follows:

- Transmittal Certificate, see **Section A**, page 6
- Organisational Overview and Performance, inclusive of all subsections, see **Section B**, pages 9–73, and
- Financial Management Reporting, inclusive of all subsections, see **Section C**, pages 75–77.

Part 3 Reporting by Exception

The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment has nil information to report by exception under Part 3 of the Directions for the 2025–26 reporting year.

Part 4 Directorate and Public Sector Body Specific Annual Report Requirements

The subsections of Part 4 of the Directions are applicable to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and can be found within **Section B2**, pages 9–73 of the 2025-26 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report.

Part 5 Whole of Government Annual Reporting

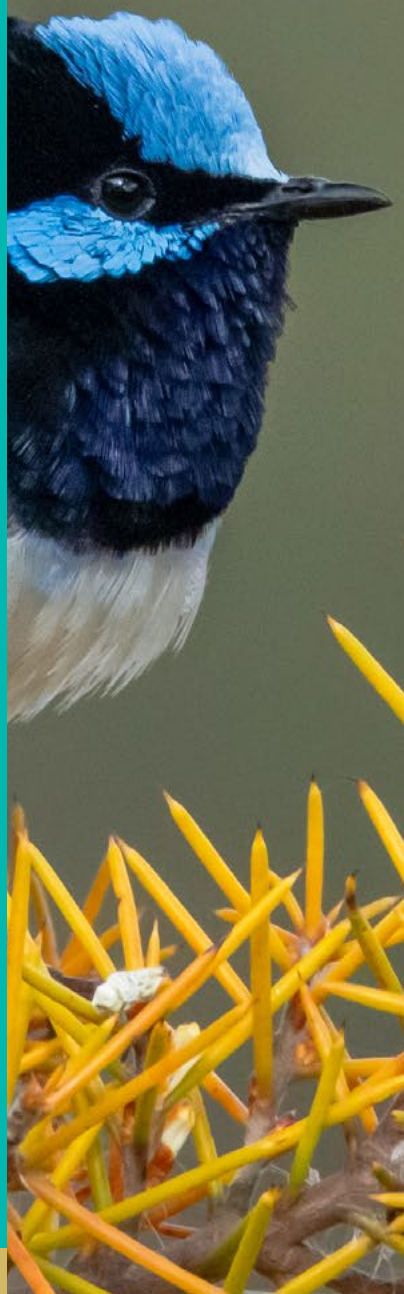
All subsections of Part 5 of the Directions apply to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Consistent with the Directions, the information satisfying these requirements is reported in the one place for all ACT Public Service directorates, as follows:

- Bushfire Risk Management, see the annual report of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate
- Human Rights, see the annual report of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate
- Legal Services Directions, see the annual report of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate
- Public Sector Standards and Workforce Profile, see the annual State of the Service Report, and
- Territory Records, see the annual report of Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic, Development Directorate.

ACT Public Service Directorate annual reports are found at the following web address: **www.act.gov.au/open/annual-reports**.

SECTION B.

Organisational Overview and Performance



B1. Organisational Overview

B1.1 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (the Commissioner) is appointed under the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* (the Act) and is accountable to the Legislative Assembly through the Minister for the Environment.

The Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment is an independent statutory position.

The Commissioner administers no other legislation and has no other statutory functions.

B1.2 Vision, Mission and Values

Vision: An environmentally sustainable ACT, region and Australia.

Mission: To act as an independent voice for the environment and sustainability in the ACT and promote community engagement.

Values: Transparency, integrity, independence, research, rigour, inclusion.

B1.3 Role and Functions

The Commissioner undertakes the following functions (these are discussed further in **Section B2**):

1. State of the Environment Reporting for the ACT (s19 of the Act)
2. Investigations:
   a. as directed by the Minister (s12(1)(b) of the Act) or
   b. at the discretion of the Commissioner, into agencies where actions would have a substantial impact on the environment of the ACT (s12(1)(c) of the Act), and
3. Investigations of complaints about the management of the environment by the Territory or a territory authority, or about issues relating to ecologically sustainable development (s13 of the Act).

The Commissioner is a Senior Executive Service 2.3 Ministerial appointment.
The Commissioner's remuneration is determined by the ACT Remuneration Tribunal.

Dr Maxine Cooper was Commissioner from 6 May 2025 to 30 April 2026. During this tenure as Commissioner the following additional roles were held:

- Chair, ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group
- Member, University of Canberra Sustainability Committee
- Member, Planning Institute of Australia ACT Executive
- Member, Planning Institute of Australia National Policy and Advocacy Committee.

The current Commissioner, Dr Ashley Bunce, was appointed from 1 May 2026 for a five-year term. Ashley has over 20 years' experience as a senior executive in Commonwealth, State and Territory governments leading complex regulatory reform across the environment, biosecurity, animal welfare, and agriculture sectors. Dr Bunce is a Distinguished Practitioner Fellow of the Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network and holds an adjunct position at the Australian National University.

The Commissioner holds the following additional roles at 30 June 2026:

- Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports
- Board Director and Treasurer, Vets Beyond Borders
- Member, BirdLife Australia Governance Committee

The Commissioner is supported by a team that at 30 June 2026 was comprised of two directors (SOG B), two assistant directors (SOG C), and an office manager (ASO 6).

Office staff members are employed under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* and observe the ACT Public Service Code of Ethics.[1]

As a small independent office, the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (the Office) is supported in its business and corporate functions by other ACT Government directorates. This includes but is not limited to the Chief Minster, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), provides:

- payroll
- procurement,
- recruitment, and
- information technology support.

the City and Environment Directorate (CED) provides support relating to:

- financial reporting
- records management
- other personnel services.

Property and Government Insourcing, in Infrastructure Canberra, provides office accommodation services.

B1.4 Stakeholders

Due to the nature of its work, Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (OCSE) has a wide range of stakeholders including:

- ACT Government directorates and other entities
- ACT environment and sustainability NGOs and interest groups
- ACT land, water and natural resource managers and management groups
- ACT and region Traditional Custodian groups
- Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly
- Australian Government departments and other entities
- ACT statutory office holders and authorities
- Educational institutions
- ACT businesses and industry groups
- The ACT community

1 ACT Government, 2010: *ACT Public Service Code of Ethics*

B1.5 Summary of performance against objectives and targets

A summary of the Commissioner's performance in 2025–26 against each key function in accordance with the Act, follows.

B1.5.1 Special Reports

In accordance with Section 21 of the Act, if –

(a) the Minister has directed the Commissioner to conduct an investigation; or

(b) the Commissioner has initiated and conducted an investigation into an issue of environmental significance to the Territory;

the Commissioner must

(c) prepare a special report on the investigation.

A summary of the performance relating to Special Reports follows.

Monitoring progress against open recommendations in previous reports

Status on ACT Government progress against the open recommendations from the State of the Environment Report 2023 and from other special reports released in prior years is detailed in **Section B.2.1**.

Minister Directed Investigations in 2025–26

There were no new investigations commissioned under Ministerial direction pursuant to s12(1)(b) and 21(1)(a) of the Act in 2025–26.

Commissioner Initiated Investigations in 2025–26

There was one new investigation initiated by the Commissioner during the 2025–26 reporting period pursuant to s12(1)(c) of the Act: *At a Crossroad: Extinction or Survival for our Canberra Dragon – An Investigation into conservation of Bunburung (Tympanocryptis lineata) and Natural Temperate Grassland in the ACT*.

This investigation was completed by the Commissioner in the 2025–26 reporting period, and the investigation report was provided to the Minister for the Environment on 30 June 2026.

The Investigation arose from a complaint the Commissioner received in May 2025. This complaint related to the construction of the Northern Access Road at Canberra Airport and raised concerns that this road allegedly both directly destroyed habitat suitable for the critically endangered Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon/Bunburung (*Tympanocryptis lineata*) and created a barrier between remaining habitat patches. The Commissioner determined there were wider concerns about the future of the species, and as well as examining the events leading to the construction of the road, the investigation explored the history of the Canberra Dragon, its conservation in the ACT, and what the future holds for the species. This statutory investigation made seven recommendations to the ACT Government.

Spahgnum bog. Source: ACT Government

B1.5.2 Complaints Received and Addressed in 2025–26

The Commissioner responds to complaints from the public in accordance with the Act. The Act provides the Commissioner with the discretion not to investigate certain complaints (s14 of the Act).

The Commissioner routinely forwards complaints to the appropriate part of ACT Government for attention. If the response requires further inquiry, the Commissioner explores the issues raised and may determine to undertake an Investigation.

Details of complaints received and how these were addressed are outlined in **Section B2.3**.

B1.5.3 Other activities in Furtherance of the Objects of the Act and Functions of the Office

The Office is committed to ongoing activities to increase engagement in sustainability and the environment. This includes:

Submissions on Environmental Sustainability

The Commissioner regularly contributes to government consultation processes to promote environmental sustainability and ecologically sustainable development where appropriate. A summary of submissions provided in this reporting year is presented in **Section B2.6**.

Background Reports

The Commissioner regularly undertakes preliminary exploration of environmental sustainability matters relevant to the ACT pursuant to the Objects of the Act (s2B). Preliminary exploration was completed in 2025–26 into opportunities for sustainable travel in the ACT and an updated dataset on water quality for waters in the ACT. A summary of these is presented in **Section B2.6**.

B1.6 Outlook: Current and Future Priorities and Challenges

The program of work summarised above in **Section B1.5** and further detailed in **Section B2.6**, outlines current and future priorities and challenges. Further discussion of current and future priorities and challenges is also presented in **Section B2.5**.

B2. Performance Analysis

This section relates to statutory functions under Part 4 of the Act, which outlines the requirement for the Commissioner to:

- deliver a State of the Environment Report (SoER) for the ACT every four years.
- conduct investigations and deliver Special Reports on the Commissioner's findings.
- report on Territory implementation of any recommendation from the above reports.

B2.1 Progress against recommendations from the State of the Environment Report 2023

The State of the Environment Report 2023 (SoER 2023), covering the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2023, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in March 2024. The SoER 2023 explored a range of environmental themes using the drivers, pressures, state, impact, response (DPSIR) framework. Assessments were made for 26 indicators across seven themes selected to address specific environmental issues. These indicators provide evidence on both the status of issues and the effectiveness of environmental management policies and activities.

The Commissioner provided 30 formal recommendations to assist the ACT Government to make strategic and practical decisions and undertake specific actions to improve environmental outcomes. The ACT Government response to the recommendations of the ACT State of the Environment Report 2023 was tabled on 6 June 2024. This document can be found on the Commissioner's website (**www.actsoe2023.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Government-Response-to-the-2023-State-of-Environment-Report.pdf**).

The ACT Government responded as follows:

- nine recommendations were Agreed in Principle
- 17 recommendations were Noted
- four recommendations were Existing Government Policy

No recommendations were Accepted.

The SoER 2023 also includes dedicated chapters on Valuing Ngunnawal Country, Community Leadership in Environment, Sustainability and Climate, Bushfires in the ACT, Canberra's Urban Boundary, and Circular Economy.

This Section provides an update on the implementation status of the 13 open recommendations (Agreed in Principle and Existing Government Policy in the ACT Government response) from the SoER 2023 for the 2025–26 reporting year in accordance with section 20 of the Act.

The Commissioner has provided comments on the directorate's response to each recommendation, and the evidence provided towards progress in addressing each recommendation was rated. Responses are classified as:

- Satisfactory – Closed
- Satisfactory – Open
- Insufficient evidence – Open
- Unsatisfactory – Open

Recommendations classified as 'Open' will require updating of progress in the next reporting period.

The aim of these comments is to guide information that will be provided for the 2026–27 reporting year and to ensure progress towards recommendations is tracked from one year to the next.

Recommendation 3: Overarching Recommendations

Establish metrics and indicators to assess how ACT Budgets and new policy initiatives have improved environment and climate outcomes under the ACT Wellbeing Framework.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CMTEDD

Current status assessed by CMTEDD			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

Comments by CMTEDD

Wellbeing Impact Assessments (WIAs) are used in Cabinet and Budget processes, assessing environmental and climate impacts, with guidance available to staff. The Wellbeing Data Dashboard, (updated 2026) tracks indicators over time to inform policy, including a new Annual Climate Resilience Indicator measuring community adaptation and preparedness for climate events.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 6: Climate Change

Develop climate change adaptation plans for key sectors in the ACT, such as for health, education, built infrastructure, and natural environments.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	No	No	No

Comments by CED

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The new Climate Change Strategy will provide a holistic focus on climate adaptation and resilience across all sectors over the next ten years and will be released in mid-2026. The ACT Government continues to develop a rigorous evidence base to underpin adaptation and resilience projects across different sectors, including through detailed climate projections through the NSW and Australian Regional Climate Modelling (NARCLiM) project.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 7: Climate Change

Develop and implement an extreme heat policy which addresses impacts of heat on the environment and communities of the ACT, and consider establishing a chief heat officer. The chief heat officer would oversee the implementation of heat wave-related preparedness, response and recovery and coordinate effort across government, private sector and community.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

Comments by CED

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

Planning provisions remain in place under the Territory Plan 2023. The performance of the planning system (encompassing 'climate ready' planning provisions) will be evaluated by the ACT Planning System Evaluation Framework. The Framework will be implemented over 5 years from July 2024 to June 2029, with planning outcomes proposed to be reviewed in year 5 of the framework. An analysis of land surface temperature for the ACT for the summer of 2024-25 was procured. This dataset will enable the future analysis of areas exposed to high temperatures and influencing factors including the urban heat island effect and tree canopy cover.

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The project to analyse land surface temperature for the ACT is nearing completion and the next stage of identifying urban heat island 'hot spots' and potential heat mitigation options will commence in the second half of 2026.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 8: Climate Change

Measure and report on the impacts of climate change on health outcomes in the ACT by investing in data collection across ACT Health and EPSDD, and engaging in partnerships with health service providers and research institutions.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED	HCSD

Current status assessed by HCSD			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

Comments by CED

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste:

No further updates to the 2025 comments from CED. 2026 commentary should be led by Health and Community Services Directorate.

Comments by HCSD

HCSD and CED are members of the Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL) Community of Practice (CoP) with academic partners and health and community service organisations.

HCSD will continue to support CED on the implementation of health adaptation and resilience actions within the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2026–2035.

Members of the HCSD hold membership on the State and Territory Climate and Health working group to progress implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Insufficient evidence – Open: In the next reporting period please provide evidence about the health impacts of climate change in the ACT, or identify data gaps which need to be filled in order to report this.

The 2024–25 response referred to the ACT Health and Climate Action Plan. It is unclear if this plan is still in development.

Recommendation 14: Human settlements

Conduct and publish waste audits of domestic kerbside waste, landfill and transfer waste, and the Materials Recovery Facility every two years.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Comments by CED

Group: Territory and Business Services

ACT NoWaste is committed to implementing Recommendation 14. The 2024 waste audit reports have been published on the Territory's web site. Waste audits of the Territory's domestic kerbside waste, landfill and transfer station waste are scheduled to be conducted again in the second half of 2026 and again in 2028. These reports will also be published when finalised.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 15: Human settlements

Develop a mechanism to incentivise reuse and redevelopment of existing building structures and materials on-site in preference to a knock-down-rebuild approach. For example, rebates for homeowners and subsidies for construction businesses which reuse materials.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	No	No	No

Comments by CED

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

The ACT Government has commissioned research to quantify the impact of the redevelopment of existing buildings in terms of construction costs and embodied carbon. These initiatives, combined with the ongoing development of the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) tool, will inform future policy related to addressing embodied carbon emissions in buildings and policy options for encouraging reuse, partial rebuild or refurbishment outcomes.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 16: Human settlements

Commit to achieving best practice thermal comfort and energy efficiency standards in the maintenance, repair, modification and construction of public housing.

Government response: EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Responsible Directorates:

CED	HCSD

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

Comments by CED

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

As at 17 June 2026, 3,943 public housing properties received energy efficient upgrades (ceiling insulation and gas to electric appliance upgrades) under the Government's Home Energy Support: Public Housing Program. The program is on track to meet the target that all feasible public housing will meet the minimum energy efficiency standards by December 2026. The ACT Government has made a further commitment through the Integrated Energy Plan to electrify all feasible public housing by 2030. The ACT Government is progressing a Social Housing Virtual Power Plant (VPP) Project to further enhance the energy efficiency of public housing properties. This may involve the installation of VPP-connected rooftop solar and battery systems across properties, subject to a successful procurement process. The first stage of a two-stage procurement process, a Request for Expressions of Interest, was undertaken in 2025–26.

Current status assessed by HCSD			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

Comments by CSD

As of 30 June 2026, over 4,090 public housing properties have received energy efficiency upgrades (ceiling insulation and/or electrification) through the Home Energy Support: Public Housing Program.

The ACT Government has made a further commitment through the Integrated Energy Plan to electrify all feasible public housing by 2030.

All new public housing is designed to meet or exceed a minimum 7-star energy rating, including environmentally sustainable features such as double-glazed windows and wall and ceiling insulation.

New properties are designed to maximise passive heating and cooling to respond to environmental sustainability, while also increasing thermal comfort and reducing energy costs for tenants.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory — Open: It is anticipated this recommendation will be closed at the end of the next reporting period in line with commentary provided by CED.

Heath Ochre butterfly (Trapezites phigalia). Source: Suzi Bond

Recommendation 19: Land

Measure and publicly report on the actual area of land use change, rather than desktop assessments which are reliant on planning zones instead of physical changes.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

Changes in land use are still most accurately measured through changes in land use (planning) zones. However, the recommendation alludes to physical changes as a result of development – these are better measured through measures to consider urban heat impacts. In relation to Canberra's urban heat risk, the ACT Government is currently finalising an urban heat mapping and analysis project for Canberra based on satellite data from the summer of 2025, with this work expected to be available before the end of 2026. This will provide a city-wide assessment of the urban heat island effect and will provide a robust baseline assessment of urban heat conditions in Canberra. As part of this work a potential Urban Heat Island Index (UHI) for Canberra has been developed and is being assessed. This can be used to identify changes and trends across the city by land use type and help in understanding potential contributing factors. In the 2026/27 Budget the Government has allocated funds to undertake a study of heat mitigation options in areas identified in the urban heat mapping work that are significantly hotter than average.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Insufficient evidence – Open: The commentary provided does not directly address the recommendation. The recommendation seeks to understand physical changes to land use in the ACT based on transparent reporting about actual change. Development or other changes can occur without a change in planning zones. Zoning is an inaccurate measure of actual land use. For the next reporting period, CED should refer to Chapter 7.4 of the 2023 State of the Environment Report to guide their response to this recommendation.

Recommendation 24: Biodiversity

Publish evaluations of the conservation outcomes of all environmental offsets in the public domain every five years.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

CED response

Group: Environment, Heritage and Parks:

The Government considers this recommendation complete noting that it did not agree to publish monitoring reports for each offsets area. These monitoring reports are published online as finalised on the Environment ACT website.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 25: Biodiversity

Expand reserved land to protect threatened woodlands and grasslands and the species dependent on these ecosystems.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Policy, Planning and Built Environment			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – Environment, Heritage and Parks			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

The expansion of the ACT's reserve land is a case-by-case decision for the Territory Planning Authority. The Planning Act allows for the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to make recommendations about areas that should be considered for conservation purposes. In 2025–26, an amendment to the Territory Plan (MPA-05) commenced to expand 6.5ha of land in the non-urban NUZ4 river corridor area to include Coombs Peninsula in the hills, ridges and buffers or reserve network.

Group: Environment, Heritage and Parks

The City and Environment Directorate reaffirms the Government response. However, in 2025/26, Major Plan Amendment 05 amended the Territory Plan by removing the Future Urban area overlay across key sites in the Molonglo Valley. A total of 8.8 ha was added to the Molonglo River Reserve network, in part to incorporate and protect pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat. In addition, Bluetts Block is now managed as reserve for the protection of conservation values.

Please note: the 2024–25 Annual Report mistakenly reported that approximately 165ha of land was added to the reserve network. On recent advice from the Office of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, this figure was only 100ha.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 26: Biodiversity

Ensure that land for biodiversity is integrated into all new suburbs by including planned native habitat patches in the same way as playgrounds and playing fields are planned.

Government response: EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Policy, Planning and Built Environment			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – Environment, Heritage and Parks			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	No	No	No

Current status assessed by CED – City Operations			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

The elements identified in the previous Government Response are embedded as routine considerations of the planning system when considering development proposals. These elements continue to apply to development proposals including subdivision in the ACT. These policies have impacted future planning and land delivery in the Molonglo Town Centre. In 2025-26, revisions were proposed to the Town Centre master plan to reduce the developable area by approximately 4ha in comparison to previous designs. The revised plans respond to the location of high value and remnant trees, Gang-Gang habitat corridors, and other biodiversity corridors/areas.

Group: Environment, Heritage and Parks

The Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design (BSUD) Guide provides planners and development proponents with specific metrics across three design themes: maintaining and enhancing native habitat, connecting and extending biodiversity across the landscape, and minimising threats from urban proximity. BSUD must be considered if Territory Plan assessment outcomes are to be achieved, and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna provides advice as a referral entity under the Planning Act 2023 to ensure appropriate environmental policy is applied and biodiversity is integrated into new suburbs. Work is underway to develop the Nature Conservation Network (NCN), a key output of the draft new Nature Conservation Strategy. The NCN is proposed to be a landscape-scale, cross-tenure network within the ACT planning strategy footprint (current and future urban areas), identifying and protecting high biodiversity areas. The Nature Conservation Strategy is expected to be released in the second half of 2026.

Group: City Operations

City Presentation continues to deliver on this commitment, modifying city maintenance programs for improved habitat connectivity outcomes within the blue-green network. As the City continues to grow, Place Management supports 123 registered environmental focused volunteer groups, through the Urban Parks and Places Program, having grown from 95 groups in 2024. This includes supporting community group volunteers in new suburbs such as Lawson Landcare, undertaking weed control and habitat planting, and Friends of Harrison Wetlands, creating a green corridor along Gungaderra Creek.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open: In the next reporting period please include information about the implementation of the new Nature Conservation Strategy.

Gang-gang Cockatoo pair. Source: Ryan Colley

Recommendation 28: Water

Improve water quality in the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee rivers downstream of Lake Burley Griffin by monitoring the impacts of greenfield development on water quality and report on these impacts and management actions publicly.

Government response: EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

Building on 2025 work, development of the Healthy Waterways Catchment Plan for Lake Burley Griffin has commenced, supported by University of Canberra research and a recently completed report on lake water quality processes. Water Quality monitoring in the urban developments of Whitlam and Ginninderry are continuing. Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River program (RUMR) will be undertaking woody weed removal along the Murrumbidgee River in the ACT, including downstream of the Molonglo River confluence.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 29: Fire

Revise hazard reduction burning practices to ensure a balance between ecological damage and protection of human life and infrastructure in light of the following:

i. **Evidence that prescribed burns are less effective under the extreme and catastrophic bushfire conditions that are predicted to become more commonplace under climate change.**

ii. **The increased frequency of unplanned bushfires in the ACT, including very severe bushfires in wilderness areas, which are already exceeding the tolerable fire intervals for many species even without prescribed burns.**

iii. **The general decrease in native habitat which is in good condition across the region.**

Government response: EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

CED response

The City and Environment Directorate (CED) reaffirms the Government's response. However, CED has now updated the Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP) 2025–30. One of the four revised Objectives of the RFMP is to "…[minimize] adverse effects of bushfire mitigation activities on ecological values". The RFMP includes specific examples on balancing ecological values and community safety through using diverse land management techniques, including prescribed burning, to reduce fire risk. CED has also updated the Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations including updates of species-specific advice based on the most up to date research and more detailed guidelines for prescribed burning.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

B2.2 Progress against recommendations from Special Reports

An update from the ACT Government on the progress of outstanding recommendations from previous Special Reports is provided below in accordance with section 20 of the Act. The Commissioner has provided comments on the directorate's response to each recommendation, and the evidence provided towards progress in addressing each recommendation was rated. Responses were classified as:

- Satisfactory – Closed
- Satisfactory – Open
- Insufficient evidence – Open
- No further reporting required – Closed (used for recommendations older than five years)
- Unsatisfactory (no evidence towards progress) – Open

Recommendations classified as 'Open' will require updating of progress in the next reporting period.

The aim of such comments is to guide information that will be provided for the 2026–27 reporting year and to ensure progress towards recommendations is tracked from one year to the next.

Murrumbidgee River. Source: Mark Jekabsons

Progress against recommendations from *Can Canberra 'Burn Right Tonight' or is there 'no safe level of air pollution'? An Investigation into wood heater policy in the ACT*

Recommendation 1

Phase out wood heaters from ACT suburbs through the establishment of a target date for the replacement of wood heaters with electric alternatives in all ACT suburbs (excluding rural areas), as has been done for fossil-fuel gas. This should be supported through accessible financial support for lower income households.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – Environment, Heritage and Parks			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Government's Wood Heater Removal Program offers financial incentives for the removal and disposal of older high emission wood heaters. As of 25 May 2026, 1,387 wood heaters have been removed since the program commenced in 2004. A rebate of $500 is available to households and $1,250 for eligible concession card holders.

Group: Environment, Heritage and Parks:

The Government has agreed in-principal to phase out of wood heaters in all urban areas of the ACT by 2045 subject to air quality and regulatory impact assessments (RIA). An ACT Air Quality Assessment has been completed which will inform the RIA currently being progressed and public consultation. The Government's Wood Heater Removal Program offers financial incentives for the removal and disposal of older high emission wood heaters.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 2

Ban the installation of new wood heaters in all ACT suburbs (excluding rural areas), for both new and existing builds.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
No	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Environment, Heritage and Parks

The Government has restricted the installation of wood heaters in Dunlop, East O'Malley and the entire Molonglo Valley (excluding Wright), where strategic air quality planning assessments have indicated they would have an adverse impact on the community. The Government will consider extending these restrictions once the necessary air quality and regulatory impact assessments (RIA) and public consultation have been prioritised and completed to help inform a final government decision on extending wood heater restrictions.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Progress against recommendations from the 2022 *State of the Lakes and Waterways in the ACT* report

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from OCSE's 2012 Report on the state of the watercourses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin

Recommendation 13: QSTP Environmental Authorisation update

The ACT Environment Protection Authority (EPA) review and update the Environmental Authorisation number 0417 for sewage treatment within the Queanbeyan City Council Sewage Treatment Plant to ensure that the treatment process results in discharge quality that matches contemporary best practise for a modern, urban sewerage treatment plant. In line with this, the QCCSTWP should continually review and improve its mitigating practises for inundation and washout events at the treatment plant.

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Access Canberra			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Access Canberra

Environmental Protection Authority: Draft conditions have been developed in consultation with QPRC and informed by industry standards and supporting technical advice, with the proposed parameters intended to improve treated effluent quality and environmental outcomes. The Environmental Authorisation (EA) variation is nearing finalisation. Remaining actions include confirmation from QPRC on minor amendments (including reporting parameters and drafting updates), finalisation of the EA documentation and supporting brief, and approval under existing EPA delegations.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from ACT Auditor-General's 2018 Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets

Recommendation 5: Catchment-wide stormwater planning

EPSDD should identify options for conducting catchment-wide planning, and undertake analysis of stormwater needs, against which future development applications would be assessed. These options should be provided to the Minister for Planning and Land Management for consideration. *OCSE Note:* catchment-wide stormwater planning encompasses more than just flood planning and should also consider water quality impacts and the measures that will be needed to mitigate these (see below recommendation).

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Healthy Waterways Plan for Lake Tuggeranong has been completed and implementation has commenced, following public consultation and development of multiple technical reports. Development of the Lake Burley Griffin (LBG) plan is currently underway, supported by research by the University of Canberra. The LBG catchment plan aims to identify potential future options for improving water quality in Lake Burley Griffin through catchment management activities.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from ACT Auditor-General's 2018 Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets

Recommendation 6: Consideration of stormwater solutions

EPSDD and TCCS, in consultation with the Suburban Land Agency (SLA), should develop a range of stormwater management solutions for new estates and subdivisions, in the context of a catchment-wide plan for the area, to ensure that the optimal solution and the means of financing it are adopted.

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Climate Change, Energy, Water, Waste			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – City Operations			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

Current status assessed by CED – Suburban Land Agency			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

Healthy Waterways is working with all sectors including Government, businesses and residents to promote stormwater designs and practices that minimise the amount of pollution entering waterways and that they are financially sustainable. ACT Healthy Waterways is now working with the SLA, Roads ACT, the Office of the Conservator for Flora and Fauna, and the Territory Planning Authority to assess and improve Water Sensitive Urban Design

(WSUD) solutions in new developments through review and feedback on Environmental Impact Statement

(EIS) and Development applications. The Office of Water is reviewing aspects of the Water Sensitive Urban Design technical provisions and guidelines to identify opportunities to improve water quality and flow outcomes from urban development.

Group: City Operations

Roads ACT continues to support Suburban Land Agency, City Renewal Authority and CED in the development of stormwater solutions for new estates and subdivisions. For example, Roads ACT continues to be involved in the:

- Yowani development;
- Molonglo Valley developments;
- Stormwater harvesting on the Ginninderry development
- Light rail project next stages;
- Deep Creek water quality ponds; and
- City East Stormwater and flood modeling

Specifically, Roads ACT provides early advice and comments on general maintenance and accessibility on new designs, via project working groups. This is a BAU activity and it is recommended this action be closed.

Group: Suburban Land Agency

The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) has established a range of sustainability requirements in its civil infrastructure contracts for Whitlam, Jacka and Lawson through the Sustainable Civil Works Framework, with implementation now delivering tangible water related outcomes. Drawing on lessons learned from earlier development stages in Whitlam, enhanced sediment and erosion control measures have been incorporated into Whitlam Stage 4, including sediment basins, swales and clear-water diversions that help protect Deep Creek and the Molonglo River Reserve from runoff.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from ACT Auditor-General's 2018 Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets

Recommendation 10: Development of performance indicators

EPSDD and TCCS should each develop performance measures for the achievement of ACT Government stormwater objectives, including the management of stormwater discharges. These should be publicly reported (for example, in the ACT Water Report).

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Climate Change, Energy, Water, Waste			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – City Operations			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Office of Water refreshed the ACT Water Strategy (now the ACT Water Strategy 2025–45) and updated the Environmental Flow Guidelines in early 2026. Revisions of the Water use and Catchment Code are underway. In undertaking a review of the Code, the Directorate will consider the need for an ACT water quality report. The Office of Water is progressing performance measurement through the Healthy Waterways program. The ACT Government has released the Healthy Waterways Plan for Lake Tuggeranong, which includes monitoring and evaluation of stormwater inputs and lake water quality to assess progress against objectives. Work is also underway to develop the Healthy Waterways Plan for the Lake Burley Griffin catchment, which will further support this approach.

Group: City Operations

Roads ACT continues to undertake Stormwater Quality Sampling at GPT locations to capture baseline readings for impacts of future events.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from ACT Auditor-General's 2018 Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets

Recommendation 16: Reducing damage to accepted assets

A working group (including representatives from TCCS, EPSDD, the SLA, Access Canberra and other relevant entities) should be established to: a) develop a coordinated multi-agency strategy to reduce the damage to accepted assets caused by building and other construction activity, and b) report to the Minister for Planning and Land Management on actions to be taken, then subsequently the results of any actions undertaken.

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: City Operations

Roads ACT are continuing to review update and improve the Municipal Infrastructure Technical Specifications Stormwater with outcomes and findings from assets being handed over. Particular focus has been placed on reviewing engineering specifications and drawings.

CED has a range of requirements to ensure quality of the assets being handed over including physical assets inspections, Closed Circuit TV footage checks and quality records of hold and release points as per the applicable specifications.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from ACT Auditor-General's 2018 Report on Acceptance of Stormwater Assets

Recommendation 17: Review and augmentation of existing stormwater infrastructure

TCCS should develop a forward program for the ongoing review of stormwater infrastructure in established areas of Canberra and augmentation of the infrastructure where necessary. The forward program should be provided to the Minister for Transport and City Services for consideration and direction.

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

CED response

Group: City Operations

During 2025–26, CED developed the Infrastructure Projects Priority list that includes stormwater improvement projects. These projects are delivered on a priority basis pending funding availability.

Roads ACT is finalising the new stormwater maintenance contract which includes a proactive program to investigate stormwater 'hotspots' that will inform future programs. This contract will be in place commencing 2026–27. This activity is BAU.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 1

Re-open water-relevant recommendations of statutory reports and continue to report against these.

Government response: AGREED

Summarised from OCSE's 2012 Report on the state of the watercourses and catchments for Lake Burley Griffin

Recommendation 7: Strategic approach to WSUD

The ACT Government should develop a strategic approach to WSUD. This should include:

a. *COMPLETED*

b. Ensuring that WSUD requirements are enforced, in particular:
   i. ensuring that wetlands and ponds are of appropriate sizes to service their catchments, and
   ii. undertaking auditing/compliance arrangements to ensure that temporary pollution control ponds for sediment control during the construction phase in new estates are maintained and functioning effectively.

c. Monitoring the effectiveness of WSUD through improved monitoring following urban developments to determine whether water quality meets WSUD general code targets. Results should be used to inform improvements in WSUD standards.

d. Comparison of ACT approaches to WSUD with those of other Australian urban areas to help ours remain consistent with developing technology and best practice.

e. Reviewing the efficacy of existing GPTs. The review should include:
   i. effectiveness in pollutant reduction
   ii. effectiveness of current maintenance of pollution control measures
   iii. capital costs
   iv. ongoing maintenance costs to ensure the current drainage infrastructure remains high-standard and is in line with current best practice, protecting downstream environments
   v. reduction of polluted leachate water, and
   vi. the capacity to manage requirements of future urban growth and development.

f. working with the NCA and NSW Councils in the catchment to coordinate a strategic approach across the catchment.

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED – Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – City Operations			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Current status assessed by CED – Suburban Land Agency			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

c. The ACT Healthy Waterways program is currently monitoring the performance of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) assets that were constructed during the ACT Healthy Waterways program. This detailed monitoring aims to quantify the water quality treatment performance of these assets. Monitoring is currently underway at four assets, representing wetlands and rain gardens. Evaluation of performance will occur sometime in the future when sufficient data has been collected. These data will help to inform catchment plans and inform to what degree the application of MUSIC models are able to realistically represent the water quality improvement performance of WSUD assets in a planning context.

d. In 2025–26 the Office of Water commissioned a review to compare ACT approaches to WSUD with those of other Australian urban areas to help the Territory's provisions to remain consistent with developing technology and best practice. Work is continuing on the review of WSUD guidelines and specifications to improve water quality and flow outcomes.

Group: City Operations

Noting that Roads ACT responsibility relates to Recommendation 7.e. only.

Roads ACT is continuing to rollout GPT modifications on a priority basis pending funding availability. Roads ACT is planning to modify and improve the operation of GPT's protecting Lake Tuggeranong as well as Healthy Waterways GPT's in 2026-27.

Group: Suburban Land Agency

In 2025, the SLA also commenced a review of progress against its Sustainability Strategy, informing the development of a new 10-year Sustainability Roadmap to embed social and environmental sustainability across the land development process. The Roadmap will include strategic goals, indicators and targets related to waterway health outcomes for the SLA.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory — Closed

Recommendation 2

Publish an annual detailed breakdown of how the Water Abstraction Charge revenue is expended.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

Work is underway to ensure water charges in the Territory are set appropriately, while supporting the ACT's water policy objectives and meeting obligations from intergovernmental agreements introduced since the original WAC methodology was established in 2003. As part of this work, an audit was conducted to identify all relevant water planning and management (WPM) costs. The audit findings are under consideration.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open : In the next reporting period please provide commentary on the audit findings including any implications for reporting on WAC expenditure.

Active travel. Source: CED

Recommendation 3

Institute a long-term monitoring and reporting program (in addition to the invaluable information provided by Waterwatch), to comprehensively assess urban water quality, ecological condition, recreation and aesthetic values, management effectiveness, and the impacts of new suburb developments on water quality.

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Office of Water is undertaking a water monitoring review project, which assesses how effectively surface water monitoring programs meet our statutory obligations, and emerging challenges such as climate variability. The project is reviewing 15 monitoring programs from 7 agencies across the ACT Government. The review covers hydrological, water quality and aquatic and riparian ecosystem monitoring. The project will produce monitoring factsheets which will provide an overview of existing programs, Geographic Information System (GIS) database which will enable spatial exploration and cross-program synthesis to highlight data coverage and identify gaps and opportunities for more holistic monitoring.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 4

Establish and maintain a single point of truth for water quality in the ACT on a public online platform. This should:

- **incorporate water quality monitoring data from all currently available sources including ACT Government, the NCA, universities (where accessible) and Waterwatch;**
- **include lake and river closure information, and pollution and blue-green algae reporting; and**
- **provide the location of the recreational water quality report and the reporting framework for the assessment of aquatic ecosystem health and water quality described in Recommendations 28 and 29 in the 2019 ACT State of the Environment Report.**

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED	HCSD

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	No	No	No

Current status assessed by HCSD			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

This work has been deprioritised due to competing priorities and resource constraints, it will be reconsidered as part of future planning, subject to resourcing and a supporting business case.

HCSD response

HCSD undertakes testing for recreational water quality during the recreational season (October to April). Results are provided to CED for reporting and any closure or restriction actions.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 5

Formally recognise the cultural value of water held by the Ngunnawal people and further incorporate Ngunnawal practices into management of urban lakes and waterways.

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Closing the Gap Inland Water Target 15c is: 'By 2035, state and territory governments increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations' access to, ownership of, and management of water inland from the coastal zone (not sea water), as agreed through jurisdictional partnership arrangements. Development is overseen by the Inland Waters Target Working Group, which is co-chaired by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the National Native Title Council (NNTC), a Coalition of Peaks member.

The Office of Water is establishing agreed and appropriate Traditional Custodian engagement pathways with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee (DNCCC) (anticipated to form in August 2026) to create an authorising environment for co-design and shared decision-making.

Preparations are underway to document roles/responsibilities of stakeholders, explore range of potential targets and consider procured Traditional Custodian facilitation services to help DNCCC engagement with inland water targets options & water literacy.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory — Closed

Recommendation 6

Fund improvement of the performance of water quality control infrastructure, including through:

- **maintenance of existing ponds, wetlands and gross pollutant traps**
- **supporting activities for water quality (e.g. expanded street sweeping, appropriate disposal of organic matter and application of fertilisers in public places), and**
- **design and build new water quality control infrastructure in accordance with sub-catchment plans developed as part of Recommendation 7.**

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	**Complete**
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**

CED response

Group: City Operations

Roads ACT continued the Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) planned inspection and cleaning program.

During 2025–26, undertook supporting activities including:

- Operationalised additional sites for stockpiles. The establishment of stockpiles sites increases sweeper operational times by reducing travel time to offload debris collected from the road.
- A trial of increased street sweeping frequency in the Lake Tuggeranong catchment identified a resultant reduction in organic matter within the lake. Funding has been provided in the recent FY26/27 budget to expand this program.

Independent testing and a subsequent review by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) of street sweeping material at the Kambah stockpile site, identified a 'beneficial reuse' classification for the material. Roads ACT intends to do further testing at other stockpile sites throughout FY2026/27.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Recommendation 7

Implement a consolidated management framework for the urban waterways of the ACT. This should:

- **take a catchment or sub-catchment approach, explicitly recognising the inter-connectedness of urban waterways, ponds and lakes, and their catchments**
- **incorporate and enhance existing management planning and strategy documents, resolving inconsistencies and ensuring that objectives for urban waterway management are clearly defined**
- **involve Ngunnawal community in water management planning and practice, and**
- **deal with management of both water flow and water quality.**

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The Healthy Waterways program adopts a catchment-based approach, integrating existing strategies to deliver clear water quality and flow objectives. The 10-year Healthier waterways Plan for Lake Tuggeranong plan has been completed and implementation is commencing in a staged fashion, focusing initially on the most cost effective interventions for water quality improvement. Lake Burley Griffin catchment plan development currently underway, which aims to identify catchment management activities that could improve water quality in Lake Burley Griffin, with consideration of both urban and rural activities in the ACT.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open

Recommendation 9

Strengthen community participation in water management through measures such as:

- **providing secure, ongoing funding to community groups working on catchment management, water quality testing, ecological surveys and public education and engagement**
- **expanding the use of deliberative democracy, and**
- **establishing a formal mechanism for meaningful community involvement in the governance of the proposed Office of Water.**

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

Participation in water management is currently supported through the Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs delivered in partnership with local Catchment Groups. Ongoing funding has been secured to deliver the Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs. The Waterwatch and Frogwatch programs undertake monitoring of water quality, complete ecological surveys and deliver engagement and education. Over 5000 people were engaged through outreach and education in 2024 and over 1000 volunteers participated in surveys and monitoring. Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River program (RUMR) is running a community stewardship grants program, to directly support community to participate in river stewardship activities.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open: In the next reporting period please provide more information about community participation in decision making relating to urban water management, not volunteering.

Recommendation 10

Reform the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) approach to monitoring, compliance and enforcement relating to urban water conditions to re-focus on its core function of protecting the environment, including that the EPA:

- **is sufficiently empowered and resourced to undertake compliance monitoring and enforcement of all environmental conditions and activities, including around erosion and sediment controls, and**
- **monitor the effectiveness and compliance of water pollution control structures for new developments, including during the construction phase, to reduce stormwater impacts on lakes and rivers.**

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Access Canberra-Environmental Protection Authority

In 2025–26, the EPA strengthened compliance monitoring and enforcement through a targeted, risk-based inspection program focused on construction sites over 0.3 hectares. Using intelligence, spatial data, and a "Rain Day Strategy" informed by weather forecasts, inspections were undertaken before, during, and after rainfall to reduce stormwater pollution. A structured compliance framework ensured consistent enforcement, with all activities recorded and followed up. The program improved oversight of erosion and sediment controls and water pollution infrastructure, enhanced regulatory accountability, and built the EPA's capacity to proactively protect waterways through data-driven, well-resourced compliance activities.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory — Closed

Recommendation 11

Ensure that all new water-related policies, plans and strategies are underpinned by future climate change projections for the ACT.

Government response: AGREED

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that all new water-related policies, plans, and strategies are firmly grounded in the best available future climate change projections for the ACT. By integrating forward-looking climate data into decision-making, the Government is strengthening the resilience, sustainability, and long-term security of the Territory's water resources in the face of a changing climate.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Closed

Progress against recommendations from the 2021 investigation into Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the ACT

Recommendation 1

ACT Government to implement a methodology (such as that presented in this Investigation) to report on scope 3 emissions across the Territory every three years.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

The ACT Government is preparing to undertake a Consumption-Based Emissions Inventory (CBEI) for the entire ACT economy, capturing the emissions related to the goods and services consumed in the Territory. For Territory-wide emissions accounting, ACT Government has shifted away from the term 'scope 3', to avoid confusion with ACT Government operational Scope 3 reporting, and to align with established approaches for measuring consumption-based emissions at a regional scale. The report is expected to be finalised in 2027 and will provide meaningful estimates to identify further opportunities to reduce these emissions.

Commissioner's comments 2026

No further reporting required – Closed

Recommendation 3

Standardise and improve collection and publication of data to ensure accurate calculation can be made of the scope 3 emissions of the ACT Government.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

Work is underway to integrate reporting into the existing Government emissions reporting system. The initial phase focuses on a single directorate for FY25–26, to confirm the process is accurate and practical before reporting for whole-of-government.

Commissioner's comments 2026

No further reporting required – Closed

Swift Parrot. Source: Ryan Colley

Recommendation 5

Implement sustainable procurement principles, including developing mandatory embodied carbon limits of procured equipment, items and materials, and supporting the longevity of equipment and waste reduction.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CMTEDD

Current status assessed by CMTEDD – Procurement ACT			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CMTEDD response

The Government Procurement (Charter of procurement Values) Direction 2020 specifies Environmental Responsibility as a procurement value. Territory entities are responsible for determining whether to implement requirements relating to carbon limits of procured equipment, items and materials, and supporting the longevity of equipment and waste reduction.

Procurement ACT contributed to a 2025 City and Environment Directorate project that identified opportunities to integrate decarbonisation considerations in relevant procurements. These insights have since informed procurement-related actions proposed for the next ACT climate change strategy. Procurement ACT also published updated guidance to support Territory entities to conduct procurements in alignment with the objectives of the *Circular Economy Act 2023*.

Commissioner's comments 2026

No further reporting required – Closed

Recommendation 11

Define and implement scope 3 performance metrics for at least 65% of the highest emission intensity infrastructure types by 2025.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	Programs and activities commenced	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	No	No	No

CED response

Group: Climate Change, Energy, Water and Waste

There is ongoing work to improve the measurement of the embodied emissions in ACT Government-led infrastructure projects. In parallel, the ACT has agreed to the significant work being progressed nationally through the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers Meeting to support the decarbonization of infrastructure. The ACT Government intends to leverage and align with these national efforts in establishing appropriate and consistent processes for the Territory. Actions to support the reduction of embodied emissions have been identified in the new Climate Change Strategy 2026–2035, providing a coordinated framework for implementation. This foundational work is necessary to build the capability required to develop meaningful metrics over time.

Commissioner's comments 2026

No further reporting required – Closed

Recommendation 12

Review and expand legislation and ensure compliance of new building regulations related to scope 3 emissions, such as:

a. Incentivise renovation of existing buildings instead of demolition

b. Undertake a carbon impact assessment and implement mandatory embodied carbon limits for all new and replacement buildings, fit out, and infrastructure

c. Implement allowable low carbon material lists for construction

d. Develop an exemplar infrastructure project to demonstrate low embodied energy building principles

e. Increase the reuse of construction and demolition materials for public and private buildings, including the development of an accreditation system to ensure quality of the materials for reuse

f. Increase inspections and reporting of compliance of building codes.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

Current status assessed by CED			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	Programs and activities well advanced	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	No	No

CED response

Group: Policy, Planning and Built Environment

The ACT Appendix to the Building Act 2004 has been updated to recognise Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) for renovations, providing greater flexibility in meeting National Construction Code (NCC) energy efficiency requirements.

The ACT Government has commissioned research to quantify the impact of the redevelopment of existing buildings in terms of construction costs and embodied carbon. These initiatives, combined with the ongoing development of the NABERS tool, will inform future policy related to addressing embodied carbon emissions in buildings and policy options for encouraging reuse, partial rebuild or refurbishment outcomes. The ACT Government has also led work at the national level to address embodied carbon through the NCC, with new nationally aligned voluntary disclosure provisions to be published as an Australian Building Codes Board Handbook in 2026.

Commissioner's comments 2026

No further reporting required – Closed

Recommendation 12

Review and expand legislation and ensure compliance of new building regulations related to scope 3 emissions, such as:

a. Incentivise renovation of existing buildings instead of demolition

b. Undertake a carbon impact assessment and implement mandatory embodied carbon limits for all new and replacement buildings, fit out, and infrastructure

c. Implement allowable low carbon material lists for construction

d. Develop an exemplar infrastructure project to demonstrate low embodied energy building principles

e. Increase the reuse of construction and demolition materials for public and private buildings, including the development of an accreditation system to ensure quality of the materials for reuse

f. Increase inspections and reporting of compliance of building codes.

Government response: AGREED IN PRINCIPLE

Responsible Directorates:

CED

CED response

Current status of the government response/actions required to address recommendation			
Discussion, planning, and resourcing phase	**Programs and activities commenced**	**Programs and activities well advanced**	Complete
Yes	**Yes**	**Yes**	No

Comments on status

Building Policy and Reform are exploring pathways to provide greater flexibility for demonstrating compliance to the energy efficiency requirements for alterations of existing residential buildings. This would help encourage more renovations and remove the need for some knock down rebuilds.

The ACT Government will partner with the NSW government to update the NABERS embodied carbon tool so that it can be used in adaptive re-use projects, especially the conversion of existing commercial property to residential buildings. The tool update will allow developers to calculate the emissions saved in their projects from preserving existing structures. This will inform future policy related to addressing embodied carbon emissions in buildings.

The ACT Government has also led work at the national level to address embodied carbon through the National Construction Code (NCC), with new disclosure provisions considered for NCC 2025.

Commissioner's comments 2026

Satisfactory – Open: Please continue reporting in the next reporting period.

B2.3 Complaints

The Commissioner received three complaints in 2025–26 and continued to work on two complaints received in 2024–25 that remained open on 30 June 2025. Four complaints were investigated and closed in 2025–26. One complaint regarding the design of sewage treatment upgrades at the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre was not investigated.

OCSE was awaiting information from CED to inform the assessment of a complaint regarding planting and sale of Callery Pear by the ACT Government at 30 June 2026 to determine whether investigation under the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993* was warranted.

Table 1: Summary of complaints for 2025–26

Issues status	Number	Topic and Status
Formal Complaints received in 2024–25 carried over to 2025–26	**2025-001/002**	***Protection of the Canberra Earless Dragon in the ACT* – Closed** The complaint was received in May 2025 and was superceded by an investigation initiated by the Commissioner into the same topic. A statutory investigation was conducted, and the final report was delivered to the Minister on 30 June 2026.
Formal Complaints received in 2024–25 carried over to 2025–26	**2025-004**	***Design of sewage treatment upgrades at the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre* – No investigation** This complaint was received in June 2025 and was still under assessment on 30 June 2025 to determine whether investigation under the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993 was warranted. The Commissioner's decision not to investigate was made in October 2025. Reasons for decision not to investigate (section 14B of the Act): • In the preliminary investigation phase for this complaint, sufficient information was gathered to satisfy the complainant that no further investigation was required. • The Commissioner determined that 'considering all the circumstances, an investigation or further investigation of the action is not justified' in accordance with section 14 (2) (b) (iii) of the Act.
Formal Complaints received in 2025–26	**2025-005**	***Callum Brae Crematorium – Block 1 Section 3 Symonston* – Closed** The complaint was received in August 2025. An investigation was conducted and the final report circulated to stakeholders in April 2026.
Formal Complaints received in 2025–26	**2025-006**	***Functionality of Belconnen Oval Wetlands* – Closed** The complaint was received in November 2025. An investigation was conducted and the final report circulated to stakeholders in April 2026.
Formal Complaints received in 2025–26	**2025-007**	***Planting and Sale of Callery Pear by ACT Government* - Open** The complaint was received in December 2025. Assessment of this complaint was deferred until May 2026 due to high workloads in the team. The Office was still awaiting information from CED to inform this assessment at 30 June 2026.

B2.4 Statement of Performance Against Indicators

This section of the report provides an assessment of the Commissioner's performance against our key statutory functions as indicators.

Table 2: Summary of performance against the Commissioner's accountability indicators

Description: Publication of the State of the Environment Report, investigation of complaints by Ministerial direction, or where a Territory agency's actions may have a substantial impact on the environment.

Indicator	2025–26 Targets	2025–26 Actuals	Variance %	Note	Minister
a) Financial indicators					
TOTAL COST ($'000)	$2, 027	$1, 563	(23%)	1	
PAYMENTS FOR EXPENSES ON BEHALF OF THE TERRITORY ($'000)	$1, 972	$1, 699	(14%)	2	
b) Accountability indicators					
a. Report on the uptake of recommendations on the ACT State of the Environment and special reports as part of the annual report	Oct-25	Oct-25	0%	i	Orr
b. Complete Ministerial initiated investigations in accordance with the Minister's direction	100%	N/A	N/A	ii	Orr
c. Report on complaints about the management of the environment by the Territory or a Territory agency as part of the annual report	Oct-25	Oct-25	0%	iii	Orr

Notes– Explanation of Material Variance (+/- 10%)

1. Lower than targeted result is mainly due to delays in planned work resulting from procurement and resourcing constraints.
2. Lower than targeted result is mainly due to Expenses on Behalf of the Territory (EBT) not being drawn until funds are to be paid out, which is largely reflective of the lower than targeted Total Cost.

Notes– Explanation of Accountability Indicators

i. Responses from the Directorates for recommendations made in the 2023 State of Environment Report were requested, collated and included in the 2024-25 Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report.

ii. There were no Minister-directed investigations during this period.

iii. Information regarding complaints is available in the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Annual Report.

B2.5 Reporting requirements from the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*

This section relates to the statutory function under s20 (a) of the Act and includes details of 'any special factor that the Commissioner believes had a significant impact on the environment during the year'.

The Commissioner identified the following special factors as having a significant impact on the environment during 2025-26:

- The ongoing process of climate change remains a critical environmental challenge for the ACT. Globally, June 2026 was the second warmest June on record, only marginally lower than June 2024 which is the warmest June on record. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is fundamental to limiting further warming and related environmental and sustainability impacts. The ACT has been a leader in emissions reduction, with a legislated target of net zero emissions by 2045 covering direct emissions (scope 1) and emissions from purchased electricity (scope 2). However, the legislated 2025 interim target of reducing emissions by 50-60% on 1990 levels was not met. Shifting the ACT's emissions trajectory will require a strong focus on reducing emissions from transport which accounts for 61% of emissions in the ACT. The Climate Change Strategy 2026-36, scheduled for release in early 2026-27, will be an opportunity for the ACT Government to outline priorities and actions for the next decade of climate action and to reaffirm its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045.
- Biodiversity continues to face significant pressure in the ACT from a range of ongoing threats including climate change, changed fire regimes, weeds and other pests, predation by introduced feral predators and of urban growth and development. As previously reported by the Office, between 2004 to 2023 the ACT's building footprint grew by 40 per cent, largely due to greenfield development, contributing to declines in the extent of critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland habitat. Urban development over this period has also negatively affected 30 of the ACT's 66 threatened species (birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and insects). In April 2025, the Legislative Assembly committed to establishing an urban growth boundary to strengthen protection of the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre areas. A formal decision had not been made in this reporting period on how the Boundary will be defined or implemented. How this occurs will be important in limiting further direct impacts on biodiversity loss as the urban footprint continues to grow in the ACT. The Nature Conservation Strategy 2026-2036 due to be released soon will also be important for outlining the ACT Government's commitment to protecting the natural environment, including biodiversity, in the ACT.

- The amendment to the *ACT Human Rights Act 2004* to recognise that 'everyone has the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment' ('right to a healthy environment) from 17 March 2025 represents a significant change to the ACT's environmental governance framework. In the 2025-26 period, the ACT Human Rights Commissioner committed to a program of reviews relating to the right to a healthy environment, examining existing Territory laws and how their implementation impacts on the natural and built environment, across the 6 substantive elements of the right to a healthy environment legislation:
  - Safe climate
  - Clean air
  - Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity
  - Access to safe and sufficient water and adequate sanitation
  - Healthy and sustainably produced food
  - A non-toxic environment in which to live, work, study and play.

The first review which commenced in the 2025–26 period, is focused on the right to clear air and how ACT laws affect outdoor air quality, air quality monitoring, home wood heaters and transport emissions.

While it is too early to assess the practical environmental outcomes arising from the new right, the Office considers the introduction to be a significant development for the environment through the formal recognition of the intersection between environmental condition, human health and wellbeing, and through the strengthening of the framework for environmental decision-making and accountability in the ACT.

B2.6 Activities Under the Objects of the Act

This section relates to the objects of the Act under s2B (a) – (e) in the Act.

The objects of the Act are to:

(a) ensure regular and consistent reporting on matters relating to the condition and management of the environment in the Territory; and

(b) ensure regular reporting on progress towards ecologically sustainable development by the Territory and territory authorities; and

(c) encourage decision-making that facilitates ecologically sustainable development; and

(d) enhance knowledge and understanding of issues relating to ecologically sustainable development and the environment; and

(e) encourage sound environmental practices and procedures to be adopted by the Territory and territory authorities as a basis for ecologically sustainable development.

B2.6.1 Advocacy and Community Engagement

The Commissioner and other Office staff engage with the community in a variety of ways, including through meetings, presentations, launches, networking events, seminars and project support involving with a wide range of individuals and groups. A full list of presentations from the Commissioner and other staff at conferences, seminars and forums are outlined in **Appendix 1.**

For more detailed information regarding Community Engagement, see **Section B8**.

B2.6.2 Submissions

The Office comments and provides input into ACT Government draft documents by specific invitation or through the public consultation process (often advertised via **Your Say on the ACT Government's website**).

In the 2025–26 period the Office made one submission, which was a response to the draft Nature Conservation Strategy 2026–36 on 27 March 2026. The submission provided the following feedback and suggestions:

- Landscape-scale planning and Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs)
  - The Office supports the plan for strategic prioritisation of high conservation values at a landscape-scale based on PCA identification.
  - Ensure the Plan identifies PCAs to protect habitat outside the formal reserve network, and provision of legislative protection to address further habitat fragmentation from urban expansion.
- Nature Positive
  - The Nature Positive approach should be adopted across all landscapes.
  - The Nature Positive aspiration needs to be supported with clear, measurable targets that are reported across both achievements and failures.
  - Consider communicating the Nature Positive approach and how decisions are made across the community.
  - Design and implement a full ACT Offsets Policy that aligns with Nature Positive principles and ensures implementation of the mitigation hierarchy.
- Intergovernmental cooperation and data management
  - Ensure implementation of the planned intergovernmental coordination to deliver strong policy coherence on nature conservation.
  - Ensure planned implementation of the Nature Conservation Strategy through the ACT Landscape Plan with a clear ACT Urban Growth Boundary and with greater prioritisation of nature conservation values.
  - Ensure implementation of the planned commitment to data standards and improved data sharing between planning, development between planning, development, compliance, and restoration functions in the ACT Government.

B2.6.3 Background Reports

Background Reports are a preliminary exploration into environmental sustainability matters relevant to the ACT. Objects of the *Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act 1993*, include (s2B (c) – (d)) to:

(c) encourage decision-making that facilitates ecologically sustainable development, and

(d) enhance knowledge and understanding of issues relating to ecologically sustainable development and the environment.

There is no statutory requirement for Background Reports to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, or for recommendations to be presented. This is only required if the matter is elevated to an Investigation. As such, there is no requirement to report on Background Reports in **Section B2.2**.

Upper Cotter River at Cotter Flats. Source: Mark Jekabsons

In 2025–26, the Office completed preliminary exploration into two areas relating to environmental sustainability matters relevant to the ACT.

Research insights into opportunities for sustainable travel in the ACT

In the 2023 State of Environment Report the transport sector's performance was rated as 'poor'. This was partly because transport is the ACT's largest source of emissions, with passenger vehicles contributing the most within the sector. In late 2025, the Office began work to better understand transport patterns and travel choices in the ACT, and the opportunities to encourage mode shift towards public and active transport. To support this work, the Office commissioned the Institute of Travel and Logistics Studies at the University of Sydney to conduct a sustainable travel survey in the ACT. The survey provides an independent evidence base to inform future assessments of ACT's transport sector. A summary background report outlining key findings from the community travel survey was shared with stakeholders. A more detailed analysis of the results is planned for inclusion in the 2027 State of the Environment Report.

Update on state of the lakes and waterways in the ACT

In 2025–26, the Office engaged the University of Canberra to produce an updated dataset on water quality for waters in the ACT. This has provided an update to data since the State of the Lakes and Water Ways Investigation undertaken by the Office in 2022. The updated data will support assessment of both urban and non-urban waters in the ACT for the 2027 State of the Environment Report and other outputs from the Office.

B3. Scrutiny

There were no requests for the Commissioner to report on progress during the reporting year in relation to undertakings made in reports produced by entities charged with responsibility for scrutiny, including the Auditor-General, Ombudsman and Legislative Assembly Committees.

B4. Risk Management

Risks are considered and addressed appropriately in all activities of the Office:

- Advice is sought on procurement for major commissions on an as-needs basis.
- A risk register is maintained for the Office as a whole and reviewed annually.
- Risk assessments are undertaken for specific activities such as off-site events.
- Staff undertake risk management training available in ACT Government's MyLearning platform.

B5. Internal Audit

CED manages the corporate functions of OCSE and reporting under this section is covered in the CED 2025-26 Annual Report.

B6. Fraud Prevention

CED manages the corporate functions of OCSE and reporting under this section is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report.

B7. Freedom of Information

Section 96 of the *Freedom of Information Act* (FOI Act) sets out the reporting requirements for agencies in relation to the operation of the FOI Act during the financial year.

While no decisions were made by OCSE under the FOI Act in the 2025–26 financial year, the Office provided documents relating to two FOI applications received by CED.

Submitting an application

CED manages FOI Act applications on behalf of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Subject to the FOI Act, every person has an enforceable right to obtain access to government information. We can assist you to locate the information you are seeking. Please contact the CED Information and Knowledge Management Team on 13 22 81.

For more information on making an access application, visit:
www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information.

Access applications are recorded in a disclosure log, as required by the FOI Act. To view the disclosure log for the CED Portfolio (which includes the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment), visit:
www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log

Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon. Source: Ryan Colley

B8. Community Engagement and Support

The Commissioner and other Office staff engage with the community through a variety of direct means including meetings, presentations, launches, networking events, seminars and project support with a wide range of individuals and groups. Presentations from the Commissioner and other staff at conferences, seminars and forums are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

B8.1 Forums and workshops

Some key community engagement and support activities involving Office staff includes:

- expert panellists in the SLA *Living with Nature* roundtable at Shirely Smith Highschool in Kenny. The roundtable provided Year 7 students with an opportunity to ask questions and seek feedback on their ideas for strengthening nature connection in their school and local urban setting.
- facilitation of a workshop on *Actionable Initiatives to Support Sustainable Transport Behaviours in the ACT*, bringing together experts from the University of Sydney with representatives across the ACT Government and community to provide feedback on opportunities for reducing car-based travel in the ACT.
- delivery of the Canberra component of the Festival of Urbanism, titled "Shaping the Nation's Capital through 'Regenerative Urbanism': Aspirational Goal or Realistic Target?". Presented by the Henry Halloran Urban and Regional Research Initiative at the University of Sydney, the event brought together speakers across ecology, Indigenous perspectives, AI and planning reforms to consider how Canberra's urban systems can move past sustainability and toward regeneration.

B8.2 Online Engagement

The Office uses online platforms to promote community engagement. Events involving the Commissioner and Office staff are routinely posted on social media, and statistical insights are monitored to determine which issues are of interest to the public.

The aim of using social media in the Office is to reach a broader audience and export messages of ecologically sustainable development.

- The Office's **Facebook profile** had 1,947 followers on 30 June 2026.
- The Office's X (previously Twitter) account, **@EnvComm_ACT** had 1,915 followers on 30 June 2026.
- The Office's Instagram account, **@envcomm** had 1,088 followers on 30 June 2026.

B9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reporting

Traditional Aboriginal culture is critically important to environmental protection and sustainable use of our natural resources. OCSE recognises this and is committed to working toward Closing the Gap principles in the exercise of its functions. In particular, the Office has taken steps to embed local Aboriginal perspectives into its work wherever possible. An example of this in the 2025–26 reporting year is the *Country Speaks, Western Law Silences* review which was a key part of the Commissioner's investigation into conservation of the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon in the ACT.

B9.1 Progress in implementing both the National Agreement and the ACT Agreement

Phase Three of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 (the Agreement) commenced during 2025. A whole-of-government process was adopted for Phase Three of the Agreement, with the development of a Focus Area Action Plan that identifies directorate-specific actions and all-directorates actions. The priority actions specified in the Phase Three action plans do not fall within OCSE's scope of work.

Limited measures were undertaken by OCSE during this reporting period in relation to these commitments. This is due to OCSE's limited capacity to contribute directly to or influence the delivery of Phase Three of the Agreement.

B10. Disability Inclusion Act 2024 Reporting

The Office is committed to implementing strategies to support the objectives of the ***Disability and Inclusion Act 2024*** which aims to:

a. foster a community in the ACT where people with disability are recognised as an important and valuable part of the diverse community; and

b. ableism is challenged and addressed; and

c. barriers to accessibility and inclusion are identified and removed.

The Office values the contributions of those living with a disability to civic, cultural, economic, educational, political, and social life in the ACT. OCSE is committed to addressing ableism and supporting the removal of physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers people with disability encounter in the ACT community.

Refer to the CED 2025-26 Annual Report for a statement describing measures taken by the Director General of CED to support the development and implementation of disability inclusion strategies, and for progress on the development and implementation of a disability inclusion plan.

B11. Multiculturalism Act 2023 Reporting

The Office is committed to promoting multiculturalism and values the contributions, backgrounds, and experiences of all community members. OCSE recognises the benefits that diversity brings to our civic, cultural, economic, educational, political, and social life and strives to contribute to the creation and evolution of a harmonious community based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.

Refer to the CED 2025–26 Annual Report for information on how the principles of the Act are being applied in administrative contexts, across community engagement, boards and committees, community programs, accessibility of information, and employee engagement.

B12. Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act Reporting

The Office's workplace has appropriate toilets, sanitary waste, and handwashing facilities in a way that respects the dignity of the person

The ACTPS Employment Portal includes detailed information about Menstruation and Menopause Leave and flexible working arrangements for ACTPS staff.

B13. Work Health and Safety

The Office is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace and maintaining the health, safety and welfare of its employees. Occupational health and safety are managed in accordance with the provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

During 2025–26 the Commissioner did not receive any notices under the Act, and there were no notifiable incidents. The Commissioner does not pay a first-tier worker's compensation premium.

CED manages the corporate functions of OCSE and reporting under this section is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report as relevant. Staff are also encouraged to take part in relevant initiatives run by CED.

B14. Human Resources Management

CED manages the corporate functions of OCSE and reporting under this section is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report as relevant.

B14.1 Workforce Profile

Full-time Equivalent (FTE) headcount and demographics

Given the small size of the OCSE team, variations can occur in the workforce profile at different times in response to changing needs and situations. OCSE's total headcount on 30 June 2026 is 6 staff. OCSE's FTE count is 5.6 as two employees are part-time.

The following tables are based on the number of paid staff on the last pay of the financial year, being 17 June 2026. Gender and other breakdowns of OCSE's workforce are encompassed in the CED Annual Report.

Table 3: Headcount by classification

Classification group	Total
Administrative officers	1
Senior officers	4
Statutory office holders	1
TOTAL	**6**

Table 4: Headcount by employment category and average years of service

Employment category	Total
Casual	0
Permanent full-time	4
Permanent part-time	1
Temporary full-time	0
Temporary part-time	1
TOTAL	**6**
Average years of service	5.9

Table 5: Headcount by diversity group

Diversity Group	Headcount	% of total staff
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	0	0.0%
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	0	0.0%
People with a disability	0	0.0%

Table 6: Headcount by age group

Age group	Total
Under 25	0
25–34	0
35–44	2
45–54	2
55 and over	2

Table 7: Permanent recruitment and separation rates

Classification Group	Recruitment rate	Separation rate
TOTAL*	**18.1%**	**0.0%**

*Figures relate to ongoing positions only

B14.2 Attraction and Retention Incentives (ARins)

The Office had no ARins arrangements during the 2024–25 reporting year.

B14.3 Participation in Learning and Development Programs

OCSE is committed to strengthening workforce and organisational capacity through building skills and capabilities. This learning and development is guided by individual performance and development plans and supported through our strategic plan. Diversity and inclusion training is strongly encouraged.

In addition to formal training sessions, office staff attended seminars, conferences, workshops and forums on various topics including:

- Active travel in the ACT
- Biodiversity legislation reform
- Biodiversity and climate change intersection
- Catchment health indicators
- Climate change and urban heat
- Conservation Council Strategic Plan
- Environmental policy
- Environmental and resource economics
- Environmental volunteerism
- Sustainable transport and road user charging
- Behavioural de-escalation
- Integrity culture
- Family pride
- Psychosocial safety
- Upper Murrumbidgee catchment management
- ACT Legislative Assembly and Committees

The Office has engaged in mentoring university students through the Australian National University Internship Program by hosting two university students in 2025-26.

Learning and development priorities for all office staff are identified within individual performance plans and in our strategic plan.

Future learning and development priority areas identified include:

- Broadening the technical knowledge base of the team.
- Formal certification in investigations.
- On-the-job learning in relation to State of the Environment reporting.

Staff are encouraged to participate in Whole of Government Learning and Development Opportunities.

All staff attended mandatory sessions and took up other ACTPS advertised training opportunities. Details of learning and development programs offered to all ACT Government staff, including the office staff, can be found in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report.

B15. Ecologically Sustainable Development

The Office is covered under the CED Resource Management Plan.

The Office had an accreditation with the 'Business Recycling Program' over the 2025-26 period.

A range of strategies are in place to assist in achieving more sustainable resource management, including:

- continuing to work towards becoming a paperless office by using electronic data management via Objective Electronic Data Management software for filing and to minimise paper and cartridge use.
- using 100% recycled paper for printing.
- circulating electronic versions of reports for comment rather than hard copies, as well as developing interactive reports online to reduce the need to print reports.
- striving for sustainable procurement through approved tendering assessment processes.
- avoiding disposable food containers and keeping non-disposable dishes and cutlery in the office.
- using the food compost bin located in the main kitchen on the office floor to dispose of organic waste, and recycling bin located in the office for recyclable waste.
- encouraging staff to ride, carpool or use Transport Canberra passes to attend off-site meetings and events where feasible.
- hybrid working as appropriate to reduce transport emissions and support flexible working arrangements.
- staff and the Commissioner have access to bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities.

Upland grasslands in Mount Ginini, Namadgi National Park. Source: Mark Jekabsons

Table 8: Sustainable development performance — current and previous financial year

Indicator as of 30 June	Unit	Previous FY 2024–25	Current FY 2025–26	% change
Stationary energy usage				
Electricity use	Kilowatt hours	11,025	10,020	-9.12%
Fossil fuel gas use (non-transport)	Megajoules	36,409	42, 069	15.55%
Diesel use (non-transport)	Kilolitres	NA	NA	NA
Liquid Petroleum Gas	Kilolitres	NA	NA	NA
Transport fuel usage				
Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV)	Number	NA	NA	NA
Plug-in Hybrid vehicles (PHEV)	Number	NA	NA	NA
Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEV)	Number	NA	NA	NA
Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) Vehicles	Number	NA	NA	NA
Water usage				
Water use	Kilolitres	26	26	-1.22%
Resource efficiency and waste				
Waste to landfill	Litres	751.28	714.85	-4.85%
Co-mingled material recycled	Litres	342.41	153.05	-55.30%
Paper and cardboard recycled (including secure paper)	Litres	264.30	261.57	-1.03%
Organic material recycled	Litres	12.82	16.85	31.44%
Greenhouse gas emissions				
Emissions from fossil fuel gas use (non-transport)	Tonnes CO_2-e	1.88	2.17	15.43%
Emissions from diesel use	Tonnes CO_2-e	NA	NA	NA
Emissions from petrol and E10 use	Tonnes CO_2-e	NA	NA	NA
Emissions from Compressed Natural Gas (transport) where possible	Tonnes CO_2-e	NA	NA	NA
Emissions from refrigerants	Tonnes CO_2-e	NA	NA	NA
Total emissions*	**Tonnes CO_2-e**	**1.88**	**2.17**	**15.43%**

**Total emissions include scope 1 and scope 2 emissions and exclude scope 3 emissions.*

See explanatory notes over page.

Explanatory notes for Table 8

1. Data for this reporting period was extracted at 9am on 3 August 2026. At the time of data extraction, the Enterprise Sustainability Platform had 97.68% actual data, 1.68% estimated data, and 0.64% accrued date.
2. Due to Machinery of Government changes where previous Directorates may have been combined or newly developed, for the purposes of reporting, these changes have been backdated to 1 July 2024 to enable a useful year-on-year comparison for impacted Directorates.
3. Note that some data reported for 2024–25 in the table may differ from figures reported in the 2024–25 Annual Report. These differences are due to utility invoice data entering the system after the data extraction date and retrospective updates to agency occupancy.
4. Fleet data reported in FY24–25 may vary from figures reported in the 2024–25 Annual Report. This is due to a full 48-month re-upload of SG fleet data undertaken to improve reporting accuracy prior to data extraction.
5. Emissions reported include Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions only. Scope 1 are direct emissions from sources owned and operated by the government, including emissions from transport fuel, fossil fuel gas, and refrigerants. Scope 2 emissions from mains electricity is consider zero in the ACT due to the ACT's 100% renewable electricity supply.
6. Emission factors used to calculate natural gas and fleet fuel are based on the latest National Greenhouse Accounts factors.
7. Baseline (2019 calendar year) emissions have been amended to include refrigerants. Change in emissions for subsequent years has been revised accordingly.
8. Refrigerant data across ACT Government is progressively being updated as new assets are identified and documented, current data is therefore limited and accuracy will be improved in future reporting years.

SECTION C.

Financial Management Reporting

C1. Financial Management Analysis

Further information on the Office's financial management is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report.

C2. Financial Statements

The ACT Government appropriation for the Office in 2025–26 was $2,027,000.

Further information on the Office's financial management is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report.

The financial transactions for the Office are formally reported in the consolidated financial statements of the CED 2025–26 Annual Report as part of 'Expenses on Behalf of the Territory'.

C3. Capital Works

The Office has no capital works projects.

C4. Asset Management

The Office does not own or manage any major assets but maintains an asset register.

C5. Government Contracting

The online ACT Government Contracts Register records contracts with suppliers of goods, services and works, with a value of $25,000 or more.

A full search of territory entity contracts notified with an execution date from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 can be made at **www.tenders.act.gov.au/contract/search.**

During 2025–26 the Office initiated 2 individual contracts exceeding $25,000.

1. Sustainable Transport in the ACT ($96,329.20 including GST)
2. 2026 ACT State of the Lakes and Waterways aquatic condition assessments ($97,305.20 including GST)

OCSE has complied with the *Government Procurement Act 2001* during the reporting year.

Consistent with the provisions governing procurements up to $200,000, the Office continues to work with ACT Procurement to complete procurement actions where necessary.

C6. Statement of Performance

CED manages the corporate functions of OCSE and reporting under this section is covered in the CED 2025–26 Annual Report as relevant.

SECTION D.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Staff presenting at conferences, seminars and forums 2025–26

Date	Type of Activity	Name of event	Provider
08/08/2025	Conference	ACT Environmental Volunteers Conference, Chair of Panel Session – Volunteering as a pathway to a career	ACT Government
12/08/2025	Webinar	Public presentation on the Close to the Edge report published by OCSE in April 2025.	Conservation Council ACT
27/08/2025	Interview	Interview contribution across electrification, energy policy, household energy and water use and efficiency	Centre for Environmental Governance, University of Canberra
02/09/2025	Roundtable	Living with Nature roundtable at Shirely Smith Highschool	ACT Government, Suburban Land Agency
11/09/2025	Workshop	ANIP workshop at Goodwin Retirement Village on retiree adoption of Electric Vehicles	OCSE
20/09/2025	Presentation	"Living Green: How Density Can Bring Us Closer to Nature"	Salon Canberra, Suburban Land Agency
26/09/2025	Forum	Festival of 'Regenerative' Urbanism	Planning Institute of Australia, UNSW, OCSE
26/02/2026	Workshop	Actionable initiatives to support sustainable transport behaviours in the ACT	University of Sydney, OCSE
16/04/2026	Webinar	Opportunities for Sustainable Transport Behaviours and Road User Charging in the ACT	University of Sydney, OCSE
11/06/2026	Presentation	How the Draft ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2026–2036 addresses the pressures of urban expansion on biodiversity values	OCSE