



ACT Government  
**2004-2005 BUDGET**

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**ENVIRONMENT A BIG WINNER IN 2004-05 BUDGET**

Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment Jon Stanhope today said the environment has again been given a major boost by the 2004-05 Budget.

“This is yet another great budget for the environment and continues the strong commitment my Government has shown in previous years,” Mr Stanhope said.

“The initiatives in this budget will further the Government’s goal of achieving a sustainable, high quality environment for the Canberra Community building on the directions established in *The Canberra Plan* and the ACT sustainability policy *People Place Prosperity*.

“We are continuing work to restore and enhance our environment after the devastating bushfires of January 2003, but we have not lost our focus on furthering our commitment to creating a sustainable environment.

“The 2004-05 Budget provides more than \$4.7 million over four years to the reconstruction and enhancement of the Cotter Precinct and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

“This funding will focus on creating and improving science, research, tourism, recreation and educational opportunities as well as furthering the important links between other facilities such as Birrigai.

“One of the more exciting projects will be the construction of a Nature Discovery Playground at Tidbinbilla. The habitats of Tidbinbilla wildlife will be interpreted through innovative, artistic and practical design solutions and will provide creative learning opportunities for children.

“We will continue to look at innovative ways to enhance our environmental experience by providing \$150,000 to investigate the engineering feasibility and potential locations for a tree-top walk in the ACT.

Mr Stanhope announced the Government would continue its strong commitment to protecting and recovering endangered species in the ACT.

“The program to recover the endangered Northern Corroboree Frog, after its habitat was significantly damaged by the bushfires, will get a further boost with a second captive husbandry facility to be constructed at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

“We have also allocated \$582,000 over the next four years to fund threatened species research including a post-graduate scholarship.

“This initiative is yet another demonstration of the Government’s commitment to research projects designed to assist the recovery of threatened species such as the Northern Corroboree Frog and the Grassland Earless Dragon,” he said.



The Chief Minister said the budget also contains substantial funds to implement the Water Resources Strategy, ***Think water, act water.***

"I am very pleased to announce that the 2004-05 Budget has committed \$8.42 million over the next four years to implement the Water Resources Strategy.

"The recently released Strategy contained a range of initiatives which the Government will be supporting including rebates for AAA showerheads as well as a major information and awareness campaign to support continual, long-term water savings in the community," said Mr Stanhope.

The 2004-05 Budget also provides \$1.2 million over four years to implement the ACT Greenhouse Strategy and a further \$4.2 million over the next four years towards Natural Resource Management.

"The Government is committed to Natural Resource Management, which complements the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and extends on the local initiatives of the Water Resource Strategy.

"The previous budget provided \$1.671 million to improve our management of endangered grassy woodlands, which included the addition of 1050 hectares of grassy woodland to Canberra Nature Park.

"We will be building on that commitment to protecting our natural ecosystems by funding the establishment of new nature reserves for native grassland conservation in the Jerrabomberra Valley.

"The Government will release the draft management plan for Namadgi National Park in 2004-05 to provide an opportunity for public comment.

"The Government is committed to the Interim Namadgi Advisory Board and the joint management arrangements for Namadgi National Park will continue to be developed with the Ngunnawal Aboriginal community. We will further advance our commitment to providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people by providing \$585,000 over four years for traineeships in land and natural resource management.

Mr Stanhope said this program builds on a successful pilot study in 2002 and will provide funding for two Aboriginal traineeships with Environment ACT in 2004-05.

There is a continued commitment from the Government to the role of the Commissioner for the Environment, with a new commissioner to be appointed in 2004-05. Support will continue for the work of the Commissioner for monitoring, investigating and reporting upon environmental issues through the production of the State of the Environment Report.

"Yet again, my Government has demonstrated our commitment to the environment through targeted spending programs which not only enhance our environment, but provide more opportunities to experience it, protect and preserve it and understand it."

**Statement Ends**