

9. ENVIRONMENT

Summary Highlights

The 2002-03 Environment budget highlights the Government's commitment to best practice in environmental protection, environmental management, heritage and cultural conservation management. In a variety of areas, the ACT takes a leadership role in protecting and enhancing environmental and heritage values.

Last year, the ACT experienced the most extreme bushfires in memory. In response to these events the Government is developing a more comprehensive Bushfire Fuel Management Plan, which will refine fire assessments, improve monitoring processes and identify priority areas for fuel treatments.

The *Greenhouse Strategy* moves into its fourth year of implementation in 2002-03. Major initiatives that will be a priority for 2002-03 include the Solar Hot Water Rebate, Cavity Wall Insulation Rebate, Energy Performance Commercial Buildings Program, and Ecobusiness.

The Government has a comprehensive commitment to preserve and build on Canberra's strengths such as its natural environment, diverse and tolerant community and its developing economic base. The Office of Sustainability, an across-government role, was established within the Chief Minister's Department in March 2002 to assess the sustainability of proposals coming forward from ACT Government departments and agencies.

The Government has a strong commitment to seeking community and expert advice on environmental matters. The benefits of these partnerships have been improved by establishing a tighter focus for the various environment advisory committee functions.

Environment protection programs will be enhanced through the National Environment Protection Council and the development of ACT instruments to give effect to National Environment Protection Measures. Waste issues will be addressed, primarily through the *Next Step in the No Waste Strategy*.

The Government is embarking on an ambitious exercise to establish a new focus for conservation efforts. Key elements of this exercise include adequate field resources, good management information, more strategic use of management resources, and support for our community partners.

The Government will advance its efforts in the protection of water resources. A review of the Water Resources Management Plan, prepared under the *Water Resources Act 1998*, will commence in 2002-03 with the intention of providing a strategic framework for sustainable water resource management in the ACT.

Canberra is a modern city with substantial amounts of nationally and internationally significant heritage. The Government will continue to promote Canberra's rich 20th Century heritage. During 2002-03, the Heritage Council will work to update the ACT Heritage Places Register so that it fully reflects the Aboriginal, natural and historic heritage of the ACT. The Council is also progressing the establishment of a "focus group", which will facilitate

communication about heritage issues between the Council and local Aboriginal community groups.

International Year of Mountains

The Government is celebrating the International Year of Mountains. In 2002 a new initiative was developed, the ACT Mountain Challenge, to encourage members of the public to enjoy a guided walk to twelve ACT mountains.

The Government is committed to continuing the ACT's involvement in the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program. Environment ACT is a member of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, which coordinates a cooperative program with State and Commonwealth land management agencies across all national parks within the Australian Alps. Events planned by the Committee include an international conference "Celebrating Mountains" at Jindabyne from 23 to 28 November 2002. A range of festivities and events will be held in conjunction with the conference.

Greenhouse Issues

Implementation of the *ACT Greenhouse Strategy* is a major commitment of the Government and the ACT leads Australia in its efforts to reduce the production of greenhouse gases.

The Greenhouse Strategy is now in its fourth year of implementation. Priority activities during 2002-03 are listed below.

- *Review of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy:* The first review of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy commenced in late 2001-02. It will provide an assessment of current ACT measures, report on the likelihood of the Strategy achieving the current greenhouse abatement targets, and recommend new measures.
- *Solar Hot Water Rebate:* The Government has introduced a rebate scheme for householders who install a solar hot water system.
- *Cavity Wall Insulation:* The Government has introduced a 25% limited discount scheme for members of the community who install cavity wall insulation. The insulation will assist in reducing households' energy consumption.
- *Energy Performance Commercial Buildings Program:* Assistance will be provided to medium to large sized commercial enterprises to enter into energy performance contracts to increase the energy efficiency of their buildings, leading to lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Ecobusiness:* A series of workshops has been developed to provide small to medium sized ACT businesses with the knowledge, information and motivation to become more energy, waste and water efficient.
- *Whole of Government Energy Report:* A report detailing energy consumption and greenhouse emissions for the whole of the ACT Government will be produced. The report will, for the first time, allow for analysis of trends in energy consumption both at whole of Government and individual agency levels. Once trends have been established, energy consumption targets will be set for individual agencies.

- *Community Awareness of Greenhouse Issues:* A local community awareness campaign will be conducted, which aims to raise the level of understanding of greenhouse issues in the community and to provide information on actions that individuals and households can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.
- *Greenfleet:* Greenfleet is a program to which motorists can contribute \$30 a year towards the local planting of trees, and the promotion of fuel efficient technology.
- *Energy Advisory Service:* The Government will ensure that the Energy Advisory Service (EAS) continues. The EAS provides the ACT community with free information on ways to increase residential energy efficiency. Tenders for a new three-year contract were called for in June 2002.
- *Public Housing Refit:* In 2002-03, the Public Housing Refit program will be continued. The aim of this program is to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse emissions.
- *ActewAGL:* The Government recognises the on-going contributions of ActewAGL to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the proposed construction of a further two mini-hydro plants in the ACT, the purchase of electricity from the methane extraction system at ACT landfill sites and the *GreenChoice* scheme for domestic and small business customers.

Office of Sustainability

The Government has a comprehensive commitment to preserve and build on Canberra's strengths such as its natural environment, diverse and tolerant community and its developing economic base. To this end, an Office of Sustainability was established within the Chief Minister's Department in March 2002. It has an across-government role in assisting the integration of economic, social and environmental considerations into the decision making processes of Government.

The work of the Office links with the reporting activities of the Commissioner for the Environment.

Environmental Advice

The Government has a strong commitment to seeking community and expert advice on environmental matters. The benefits of these partnerships have been improved by establishing a tighter focus for the various advisory committee functions. Changes have been introduced to reduce duplication of effort, and overlapping terms of reference and lines of communication.

The Environment Advisory Committee, a source of expert and community advice on environmental matters, has been replaced by two new committees, the Natural Resource Management Committee and the Environment Protection Technical Advisory Committee. Two community forums were also established, a Rural Forum and an annual Community Forum. Other existing committees, boards and authorities remain as complementary forums for expert advice and community consultation.

Further, supporting the Government's commitment to independent advice, the Commissioner for the Environment will continue to receive Government support and an Independent Conservator of Flora and Fauna will be established. The independent Conservator will have a close relationship with the existing Flora and Fauna Committee.

The Government will be conducting a full review of the operation of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*, including a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Environment Protection Authority. This will support the statutory review of the Act to be undertaken in 2003-04.

Participation in National Environment Forums

Review of Ministerial Councils

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) undertook a review of Ministerial Councils in June 2001. This review sought to streamline the number of Ministerial Councils by combining Councils in related functional fields, and thereby to improve opportunities for co-operative policy development.

Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC)

The NRMMC was created by the amalgamation of the natural resource management component of the Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, and the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

In 2002-03, the Government will be involved in a range of NRMMC activities of significance to the ACT. These will include the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Natural Heritage Trust Extension.

Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC)

The EPHC was created by the amalgamation of the National Environment Protection Council, the non-natural resource management component of the Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, and the Heritage Ministers' Meeting.

In 2002-03, the Government will support a range of EPHC activities of significance to the ACT. These will include National Environment Protection Measures and the development of an Integrated National Heritage policy.

Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC)

The PIMC is created by the amalgamation of the primary industry component of the Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, and the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

In 2002-03, the Government will support a range of PIMC activities of significance to the ACT. These will include Foot and Mouth Disease issues, Bovine Spongiform

Encephalopathies (mad cow disease) issues, mandatory livestock identification and tracing system, and the Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program.

Murray Darling Basin Commission

Participation in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission was formalised by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1997.

In 2002-03, the Government will support Commission activities of significance to the ACT. This will include on-going discussions with other jurisdictions to identify how a cap on water extraction could apply to the ACT.

High Level Greenhouse Group

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) High Level Group on Greenhouse was formed in 1997 to involve States and Territories in the development of the National Greenhouse Strategy.

In 2002-03, the Government will support COAG processes to increase greenhouse abatement including implementing agreed measures in the National Greenhouse Strategy and providing input into national policies and processes.

Environmental Legislation

In response to both the National Competition Policy Review Program, and a commitment to creating a best practice legislative base for environmental activity in the ACT, the Government is committed to a significant program of new environmental and heritage legislation.

Heritage Legislation Reform

An Exposure Draft of the Heritage Bill 2002 is to be tabled in the Assembly in 2002-03. This proposed legislation will contain improved procedures for registration and protection of heritage places and objects in the ACT.

Clinical Waste Act 1990

During 2002-03, a proposal for best practice clinical waste management will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Lakes Act 1976

To reduce over-lap and duplication with New South Wales, the *Lakes Act 1976* will be amended to remove the need for individuals licensed in New South Wales to obtain an ACT power boating permit.

Domestic Animals Act 2000

During 2002-03, proposed amendments to the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* will be developed to address operational issues arising from the first twelve months of operation of the Act.

Nature Conservation Act 1980 and Environment Protection Act 1997

Amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* and the *Environment Protection Act 1997* will be developed in 2002-03 to improve the enforcement provisions in these Acts.

Environmental Management

National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs)

The Environment Protection and Heritage Council, incorporating the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC), comprises Ministers from the Commonwealth, States and Territories. Complementary legislation in each jurisdiction establishes the NEPC and gives it the power to make National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs).

NEPMs are designed to provide equivalent protection from pollution to all Australians and to ensure that decisions by businesses are not distorted and markets are not fragmented by variations in environmental standards between jurisdictions.

Ambient Air

Under the Ambient Air Quality NEPM all jurisdictions established monitoring procedures and commenced assessment and reporting by 30 June 2001. These procedures were formalised in the ACT's Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Plan. As agreed in this plan, an instrument has been purchased to monitor particles 10 micrometres or less in size on a continuous basis. Data collected will be included in the 2002-03 Ambient Air Quality Report.

In September 2001, NEPC started the statutory process to make a variation to the Ambient Air Quality NEPM to extend its coverage to particles 2.5 micrometres or less in size, and to develop a standard measurement methodology. The ACT is a member of the Jurisdictional Review Network and has participated in the review process, which has included consultation with industry, conservation groups and the public. The NEPC is scheduled to make a decision on the proposal in 2002-03.

Air Toxics

On 29 June 2001, the NEPC initiated the development of an Ambient Air Toxics NEPM. Air toxics are gaseous, aerosol or particulate pollutants (other than the six criteria pollutants) which are present in the air in low concentrations with characteristics such as toxicity or persistence so as to be a hazard to human, plant or animal life.

The NEPC has been working to develop agreed national standards, goals and guidelines for air toxics. The ACT will continue to actively participate in this process to ensure an appropriate outcome for the ACT.

Movement of Controlled Waste

This NEPM covers the movement of controlled waste into, and out of, the ACT. During 2002-03, the Government will implement the NEPM through the issuing of Consignment Authorisations and the licensing of disposal/treatment facilities under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*. The ACT will provide an annual report to the NEPC on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure.

National Pollutant Inventory (NPI)

In 2000-01 the ACT reported twenty one facilities and also provided estimates for diffuse emissions from non-industrial sources, such as transport and wood fires. In the reporting years 2001-02 and 2002-03, data supplied to the NPI national database from the ACT covers industrial facilities. The ACT will provide an annual report to the NEPC to report on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure.

Used Packaging

The Government's obligations with regard to the Used Packaging Materials NEPM has been implemented by way of an Industry Waste Reduction Plan (IWRP) under the *Waste Minimisation Act 2001*. This IWRP requires brand owners of used packaging materials to undertake or assure the systematic recovery, reuse and recycling or energy recovery of consumer packaging, in which the brand owners products are sold, and to report to the Environment Protection Authority on an annual basis the rates of recovery and types of material recovered. The ACT will provide an annual report to the NEPC to report on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure.

Diesel Vehicle Emissions

The NEPC made the Diesel Vehicle Emissions NEPM in June 2001. The NEPM sets standards for in-service diesel vehicle emissions and a range of strategies for Governments to introduce to meet those standards. In 2001-02, a scoping study was undertaken on the extent of the need to manage emissions from diesel vehicles. The results of this study will form the basis of implementation of the NEPM in 2002-03.

Firewood Licensing / Firewood Strategy

Since 5 April 2001, the sale or supply of firewood in the ACT requires an environmental authorisation. The conditions of the authorisation are taken from the Government's Firewood Code of Practice, which are now mandatory through amendments to the *Environment Protection Act 1997*.

During 2002-03, the Government will review the regulation of firewood heaters, including an examination of options for a subsidy scheme to help with the replacement of older, less-efficient heaters.

In addition to licensing wood merchants, the Government will promote the ACT Firewood Strategy and its public education program including advice about the correct use of wood heaters.

State of the Environment Report

The Government works with the ACT Commissioner for the Environment to implement the agreed recommendations from his report. The Government has also been working with the Commissioner on streamlining the reporting process in preparation for work commencing on the 2003 report. The Commissioner's Office has been allocated additional funds to prepare the 2003 State of the Environment report.

Cooperative Research Centre Partnerships

The Government is working closely with Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) that are contributing to further research in the areas of freshwater ecology, pest animal control and marsupial biology and impacts.

The CRC for Freshwater Ecology is undertaking a major project on the Cotter River to assess the effectiveness of environmental flows. Much of the ACT's in-kind contribution to CRCs is focused on this project.

Management of Bushfire Fuels

The *Bushfire Act 1936* requires Bushfire Fuel Management Plans for all government managed land to be prepared every two years. An initial draft of the 2002 Plan was prepared and submitted to the ACT Bushfire Fuel Management Committee in late December 2001. As a result of the bushfires in that month, it was agreed that the development of the 2002 Plan would require additional time to enable detailed analysis to be undertaken of the fire events. For this reason, an interim Plan was approved.

A more comprehensive plan will be developed by the end of October 2002, prior to the commencement of the next fire season. The primary objective of the plan is to outline actions undertaken by land managers in order to reduce the risk of damage occurring to life and property in the ACT from bushfires. The protection of biodiversity values must be taken into consideration when determining the most appropriate fire hazard reduction technique to be selected for each given area of land.

The updated plan will refine fire risk assessments, improve monitoring processes and identify priority areas for fuel treatments. The plan will also include an implementation schedule to enable agency performance to be measured. Two independent experts on fire management have been commissioned with the important task of reviewing the plan's fire fuel management strategies. Some areas of Government managed land previously not considered for inclusion into the plan have also been identified.

Waste Management

Load-Based Discharge Licensing

The load-based discharge licensing scheme, introduced in July 2000, to encourage activity managers to reduce pollutant emissions to our air, water and soil has been implemented. The scheme encourages minimisation of emissions through the application of economic measures, which include a component that varies according to the amount of pollutants actually emitted.

Managers of activities covered by the scheme either hold an environmental authorisation or have submitted applications for environmental authorisations, which are being considered in conjunction with environment management plans where necessary.

No Waste by 2010

Implementation of the *Next Step in the No Waste Strategy* will continue with the following priorities for 2002-03:

- identify and address factors inhibiting the reuse and recycling of the priority waste streams as identified in the *Next Step*;
- augment education and community programs to better inform, encourage and engender community commitment to achieving the goal of No Waste. Ecobusiness workshops will be conducted to encourage commercial businesses to minimise the waste they produce;
- implement best practice waste management throughout Government buildings and initiate a whole of government approach to the Strategy and to better articulate the social benefits of it to the wider community;
- implement a waste pricing strategy that sets disposal charges at levels that provide incentives to reuse and recycle;
- through contract arrangements with Thiess, operate the Mitchell Resource Management Centre and small vehicle transfer station at Mugga Lane, and establish a No Waste Education Centre to further enhance recovery and educational opportunities in the ACT;
- develop markets for recycled materials to provide waste generators with alternatives to landfill disposal and to recover the true value of resources;
- facilitate the establishment of services to collect organic wastes from commercial sources;
- evaluate the proposals for the collection of domestic waste and for the processing of recyclable material. Determine and establish appropriate new domestic collection and processing contracts for the ACT;
- target building and demolition waste through the Development Control Code for Best Practise Waste Management in the ACT and the establishment of a mixed builder's waste recovery centre;
- participate in the National Packaging Covenant and assess the requirements for waste management regulations; and
- monitor emerging waste reduction techniques and identify the application of future waste management technologies in the ACT.

Nature Conservation

The Government is embarking on an ambitious exercise to establish a new focus for conservation efforts. There are some key areas where a change in the way we do things can establish new levels of performance that will bring enduring conservation benefits. They are adequate field resources; good management information; more strategic use of management resources; and support for our community partners. Over the next three years, \$1.5m will be invested in the change process. Progress will be monitored and publicly reported and

available on the Environment ACT website. The newly formed ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee will oversee monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process.

Integrated Nature Conservation Plan

The Government will develop an Integrated Nature Conservation Plan, which will provide the key framework for management objectives, priority setting and decision making for nature conservation in the ACT. Environment ACT will develop this geographic information-system based project during 2002-03 in consultation with community and professional groups. The Plan will assist coordination between different management plans and strategies governing natural resource management in the ACT.

Conservation of Biodiversity

The Government will undertake survey and assessment programs of grassy ecosystems, particularly Yellow Box - Red Gum Grassy Woodland, as an input to the preparation of a revised Action Plan for this endangered ecological community. Partnerships with community groups with appropriate expertise assist this work and provide the basis for longer-term monitoring of ecological condition of key woodland areas.

An Action Plan for the threatened species Ginninderra Peppercress (*Lepidium ginninderrense*) will be released for public comment early in 2002-03.

An annual ecological survey and monitoring program is maintained to support ACT government agencies to deliver Government programs that achieve ecologically sustainable development in Canberra.

The ACT has played a leading role in a five year program of ecological surveys in cooperation with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, local government agencies surrounding the ACT and industry and community groups. Information from this work, which was supported in part by the Natural Heritage Trust, is contributing to the preparation of a Planning Framework for Natural Ecosystems in the NSW Southern Tablelands and the ACT. This report will be completed during 2002-03 and become available to all spheres of government in the region, community groups and land development interests.

The Government is supporting a study of the relationship between eastern grey kangaroo populations and their food supply in partnership with the University of Canberra, the Marsupial Cooperative Research Centre, CSIRO and NSW Agriculture. Environment ACT is also cooperating with an Australian National University project researching movement of kangaroos in rural areas. The expected outcome of this research work is better-informed management of kangaroos by rural landholders and managers of nature conservation areas.

Off-reserve conservation

Off-reserve conservation is a key element of ecologically sustainable development. An across-government approach will be used to ensure that the conservation requirements of significant natural assets, including threatened species and ecological communities, are addressed through planning, development, and land management processes. Off-reserve

conservation on rural and peri-urban lands will be supported through the provision of biodiversity information and advice on best practice land management.

The Rural Conservation Fund

The Rural Conservation Fund is a financial assistance scheme directed at providing support for projects on leased rural land that contribute to the conservation needs of the biodiversity of the ACT. It commenced operations in May 2000. Greening Australia is a partner in the project, promotes the fund and assists in the application process. The rural community also provides in-kind support for the project.

Operation of the Fund is overseen by the Rural Conservation Fund Advisory Committee. The Committee advises the Minister for Urban Services on project proposals and recommends relevant funding.

Feral animal management

The ACT Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy was released in April 2002. The strategy introduces a structured process of planning, action and evaluation to help management of vertebrate pest problems. The focus is on mitigation of pest animal damage to conservation and rural production resources rather than reduction of pest numbers as an end in itself. Increases in efficiency and effectiveness are strategic goals.

Immediate implementation objectives are to promote and introduce the strategic process for the management of vertebrate pest problems, and to evaluate progress and issues arising.

Pest programs, which the ACT will be involved with during 2002-03, include:

- Namadgi program to monitor wild goat populations;
- the Joint NSW/ACT Wild Dog Control Program;
- co-ordinated fox control programs;
- the wild pig control program; and
- rabbit control and monitoring programs.

The Environment ACT Vertebrate Pest Control Officer coordinated over 40 feral animal control programs in the previous year. These types of programs will continue in 2002-03.

During 2001-02 Environment ACT initiated a highly successful integrated wild dog and fox control program in the Tidbinbilla and Paddy's River rural district. As a result of this program sheep losses due to wild dog attacks in the district have declined significantly. An independent expert review of the program will determine whether further improvements can be made during 2002-03.

A new initiative in 2002-03 will be the use of sensor cameras placed near baiting locations to confirm that the baits are being taken by target animals and not by native species. The ACT Vertebrate Pest Control Officer will also conduct workshops with ACT rural lessees and adjacent NSW land holders with the aim of further improving the wild dog control program.

Weeds management

All land managers, both private and Government, are responsible for weed control. This function is undertaken cooperatively between the Government and community in line with the ACT Weeds Strategy. The capital works program for 2002-03 includes approximately \$150,000 for exotic weed control.

There are a number of weed species, which are of particular concern in the ACT. Priority action to be undertaken in 2002-03 includes:

- the willow control program;
- capital works funding being directed towards woody weed species, particularly blackberry and sweet briar control in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve;
- funding to provide herbicides to rural lessees to supplement their efforts to control agricultural weeds such as serrated tussock, African lovegrass and Chilean needlegrass;
- the development and finalisation of management plans for declared weed species in the ACT by ACT Government Land Managers and the other members of the ACT Weeds Working Party. These plans will assist managers to target effective actions into the most important conservation and land management areas within the ACT and set realistic targets to enable future monitoring of progress; and
- external grant funding has been secured to match commitments made by the ACT Government and ACT rural lessees to manage weeds in riparian areas. The program will adopt an integrated approach involving controlled grazing, direct weed attack and selective rehabilitation of degraded riverbanks.

Fisheries Management

Fisheries Management is guided by the report, *'The Status of Fish in the Australian Capital Territory: A Review of Current Knowledge and Management Requirements'*, which was released in 2000. Fisheries management is conducted under the new *Fisheries Act 2000*.

Construction of a fishway at Vanitys Crossing on the Cotter River was completed in 2001-02. Monitoring of its effectiveness will commence in 2002-03. An Action Plan for the threatened species Silver Perch (*Bidyanus bidyanus*) will be released for public comment early in 2002-03.

The Government has released the *Fish Stocking Plan for the ACT: 2001-2005*, which outlines the Government's stocking program for urban lakes and ponds. In 2002-03 Murray Cod will be stocked in Lake Ginninderra, with Silver Perch to be stocked in Googong Reservoir.

Land Management Agreements

Land Management Agreements (LMAs) establish a framework for ecologically sustainable management of leased rural land, and are negotiated with each rural lessee as they apply to renew their lease. LMAs address issues such as land care requirements, fire and drought protection, and natural resource management. Nature conservation issues identified in a LMA may lead to a proposal for funding by the Rural Conservation Fund.

Soil Conservation

A Rapid Stream Assessment of the condition of ACT streams was finalised in 2001. The aim of this report was to identify degraded stretches of waterways for priority action. The information has been used to strategically allocate funding for restoration projects, and continues to be incorporated into Land Management Agreements between the Government and affected rural lessees. Resources provided through Landcare extension and the ACT Riparian Restoration Fund have assisted both farmers and Environment ACT officers to develop and implement sustainable improvements in ACT river health.

Further monitoring will be undertaken during 2002-03 to determine the extent of other issues affecting soil conservation such as dryland salinity and soil acidification in the Territory.

Management Planning

Management Plans for Public Land are required under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*. During 2002-03, a management plan for the Lower Molonglo River Corridor and a draft Wetlands Policy will be released.

During 2002-03 a draft management plan for Namadgi National Park will be produced to provide the opportunity for comment on the proposed management directions for the park. It is expected the final plan will be ready for release in 2003-04.

Trees

Approvals have been required for tree removal or significant works under the canopies of trees since the implementation of the *Tree Protection (Interim Scheme) Act 2001* in April 2001.

The Government is committed to introducing a permanent tree protection scheme, and to extending the urban tree protection to trees on unleased urban lands. During the first year of the *Tree Protection (Interim Scheme) Act 2001*, it has also become clear there is room to improve the operation and scope of the legislation. The Government has therefore commenced the preparation of an issues paper for community discussion. The paper will discuss a range of the available options for better, long term tree protection. The community's views on these options will be considered by the Government before it decides how to proceed with a permanent scheme.

Animal Welfare and Companion Pet Ownership

Codes of Practice

Codes of practice are made under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*. Currently, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) is working on the development of two Codes of Practice setting minimum standards for the Welfare of Captive Amphibians and the Welfare of Live Crustaceans for Human Consumption. These Codes of Practice will be ready for gazettal in 2002-03.

The AWAC will also be conducting a review of all gazetted Codes of Practice to ensure that these Codes reflect best known scientific and husbandry practices.

Review of the Animal Welfare Act 1992

The AWAC has expressed concerns regarding various provisions of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (the Act). An AWAC sub-committee has been established to review the Act. It is intended that the Review's recommendations will be incorporated with various technical amendments arising from the National Competition Policy review of the Act.

Native Animals as Pets Workshop and Policy

The welfare needs of native animals kept as pets are being considered by AWAC. A *Native Animals as Pets Workshop* was held in mid 2002 with key stakeholders. The issues identified at the workshop will be incorporated into a discussion paper, to be released for public consultation in 2002-03.

Layer Hen Welfare

The Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed the '4th Edition of the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry' at their meeting on 2 May 2002. This Model Code of Practice will be gazetted under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* in 2002-03.

Assistance to the RSPCA

The Government has provided dedicated funding assistance to the ACT branch of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) for their animal welfare activities and for the Animal Welfare Inspectorate under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

Managing Exotic Animal Diseases

Foot and Mouth Disease

A major Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in Australia would result in direct livestock trade losses of nearly \$6 billion in the first six months. The overall economic cost could be as high as 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product.

Recognising how serious such an outbreak would be, the Council of Australian Governments set up the FMD Taskforce in June 2001, to coordinate a review of national whole-of-government frameworks for the prevention, preparedness for, and management of, a major animal emergency disease outbreak.

ACT legislation has been reviewed in terms of its capacity to support an exotic disease outbreak and to date only one minor issue with regulations has been identified. The national Memorandum of Understanding is not expected to give rise to a legislative outcome for the ACT under the requirements of the *Administration (Interstate Agreements) Act 1997*.

The Government is continuing to participate in a series of simulation exercises designed to test preparedness. There will be a range of exercises held during 2002-03, including an

across-Australia exercise planned for mid September 2002, and a variety of other mini exercises involving the ACT with New South Wales and other States.

Water Resources Management

Sustainable urban water management

The ACT can be proud of many of its achievements in relation to urban water management. There is a need to build on these successes in order to progress sustainability objectives, particularly through the more integrated consideration of water supply, wastewater and stormwater management, and land use. Opportunities exist to improve the water quality of urban waterways, re-introduce water related ecological values into local neighbourhoods, increase recreational benefits and amenity, limit the impact on water supply catchments, and for significant infrastructure savings. In order to begin to capture these opportunities, water sensitive urban design concepts were introduced into the planning and development process during 2001-02. This work will continue during 2002-03, particularly in regard to adopting suitable measures in greenfield developments and in re-development of established residential areas.

A review of the Water Resources Management Plan will be undertaken to provide a more comprehensive guide to implementation of the provisions of the *Water Resources Act 1998* and to establish a strategic policy framework for sustainable management of the ACT's water resources.

Integrated Catchment Management Framework

The Integrated Catchment Management Framework provides the foundation on which secure long-term sustainable development can be planned and put in place. An implementation plan was completed in 2001. The Framework will be reviewed every two years to ensure that it continues to reflect community and government aspirations and results in more sustainable land and water management practices. Work on sub-catchment plans continues, with draft plans produced for the Tuggeranong-Tharwa and Woden-Weston Creek areas. A Catchment Coordinator has been employed to assist the groups to develop the plans, along the lines of the work previously undertaken by the Ginninderra Creek and Sullivan's Creek Catchment Groups.

Salinity and Water Quality

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) is the first comprehensive national strategy to address salinity and deteriorating water quality; issues seriously affecting the sustainability of Australia's agricultural production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure and regional communities. The ACT has signed an inter-governmental agreement with the Commonwealth to access funds under the NAP.

The Murrumbidgee River catchment has been identified as a priority region for funding under the NAP and the ACT is participating as a full partner in developing the Catchment Blueprint. The Blueprint will identify issues and actions to be undertaken across the catchment and in the ACT.

Riparian Policy

The Government recognises that good management of the ACT's riparian zones is important for maintenance of water quality and river ecosystem health.

A Discussion Paper is being prepared for management of riparian zones currently on rural land. The major focus will be on land adjacent to the Murrumbidgee River between Point Hut Crossing and Tharwa.

Lessees of the land in question include those who have applied to have their leases renewed. It is appropriate that future management of riparian zones be resolved before these leases are renewed.

Environmental Education and Community Awareness

Community Participation

Waterwatch

Waterwatch is a community driven program using community water monitoring networks to further effective partnerships between community members, government and the private sector to understand and protect the natural environment.

Waterwatch delivers the "healthy waterways" message to the community through four linked, but different programs. These are as follows:

- education in schools and the general community;
- monitoring the state of our waterways;
- history of the changes in our waterways; and
- community support.

Park Care

Park Care is an ACT program where people from the community form groups of volunteers and work with Rangers to care for local nature reserves and Namadgi National Park.

There are currently 15 active Park Care groups. To increase the effectiveness of Park Carers in environmental management, staff and volunteers are working together to develop a method to assess and prioritise on-ground work. This and the development of a new policy on Park Care volunteering will be the focus for 2002-03.

Landcare

The Landcare program seeks to encourage landholders to undertake landcare and related conservation works by supporting collective action by communities to sustainably manage the environment and natural resources.

Environment ACT has received a further year of Natural Heritage Trust funding for Landcare support in the ACT. In 2002-03, the Government will be involved in actively promoting

Landcare and supporting Landcare groups. Currently there are seven rural Landcare groups and 21 urban Landcare groups including two catchment groups which employ their own part-time coordinators.

The ACT Landcare Coordinator will continue to organise a range of activities, including assistance to rural Landcare projects, field days, workshops and participation in environmental events. The Coordinator will also target rural areas of the ACT, where Landcare groups do not exist, to encourage participation in Landcare.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve continues to develop its reputation as the ACT's premier environmental tourism venue.

Additions to the captive wildlife collection continue to attract new and existing visitors, with Long-nosed Potoroos now being placed on public display in the "Black Flats" enclosure. The construction of a number of wildlife displays in the newly opened Education Centre allows a number of reptile, bird and mammal species to be used as part of school group educational activities for the first time.

Natural Heritage Trust

The Government partners with the Commonwealth in providing grants to the community and Government agencies in the ACT and region through the Natural Heritage Trust.

In 2001-02, \$952,327 was distributed in grants through Bushcare, Endangered Species, Farm Forestry, Fisheries Action, Landcare, Murray-Darling 2001, Waterwatch and Wetlands programs. The Government administers the assessment, monitoring and acquittal of grants as well as the distribution of devolved grants for restoration of streambank vegetation and through the *Bushcare in the Bush Capital* Program. This Natural Heritage Trust funding is matched by Government and local community investment.

This year was the final year of the current Natural Heritage Trust partnership agreement. Consequently, the emphasis during the year was on the evaluation and acquittal of concluding projects.

Negotiations have commenced with the Commonwealth about delivery of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality in the ACT. It is expected that during 2002-03, the Territory will have entered into a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth to deliver this program as well as the Natural Heritage Trust extension.

Dedicated Funding for Key Community Organisations

The Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra is the peak environmental organisation for community groups in the ACT. In recognition of its role as a source of community views and advice and an environmental advocate, the Government has provided dedicated funding assistance to the Conservation Council so it can continue its work with greater certainty of financial support. Similarly, the Government has provided dedicated funding assistance to the Canberra Environment Centre in recognition of its role as a community environmental education and information resource.

ACT Environment Grants

Following the Government's decision to directly fund the Conservation Council of the South East Region and the ACT, the RSPCA, and the Environment Centre, there has been a review of the ACT Environment Grant categories for 2002-03. Future grant funding will be provided in the categories of:

- on-ground environmental projects;
- sustainable development and resource management;
- environmental research and advocacy; and
- animal management and welfare services.

Environment and Heritage Awareness, Education and Community Support

In 2002-03, the Government will enhance cooperative arrangements with the community in protecting, preserving and promoting the natural and cultural environment.

A Nature Conservation Communication Strategy will be developed to set the framework and forward agenda for education, information and volunteer support programs to be delivered as part of the new focus on nature conservation.

There will be opportunities and support for the community to become more involved with nature conservation through the establishment of education and information programs promoting awareness and knowledge of, and commitment to, the environment.

ACT Heritage and Nature Tracks Strategy

Work commenced on the development of a Heritage and Nature Tracks Strategy in 2001-02, and is scheduled for completion in 2002-03. Scope of the strategy will include tracks that support walking, cycling and equestrian use of the variety of recreational tracks and nature based opportunities from the urban areas through to the bushland and forests beyond.

The strategy will provide a framework to support a more integrated approach to the provision of linked and thematic tracks and more comprehensive information to Canberrans and visitors on track opportunities.

Community Partnership Database

In 2001-02, Environment ACT continued to develop a database to support partnerships between Government and the community in caring for the ACT environment. The database provides information on community organisations, activities, sites and resources relating to environment and heritage in the ACT and region. An additional database component was completed in 2001-02 to assist with management and delivery of grant funding to groups. During 2002-03 plans are to further enhance the database with mapping and photographs of projects. The proposed incorporation of the database into a website is planned for 2002-03, following a trial of the grant management component.