



BUDGET 2008 - 2009 READY FOR THE FUTURE MEDIA RELEASE

No. 6

MASSIVE BOOST FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT

The ACT Government is committed to tackling climate change and protecting our natural environment to ensure that Canberra remains a great, clean and natural city to live, Chief Minister and Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change Jon Stanhope said today.

“The ACT Government will invest significant new funding in initiatives that are aimed at reducing our carbon footprint to reach our carbon emissions target of a 60 per cent reduction of 2000 levels by 2050 and to limit 2025 greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels, as set out in our climate change strategy *Weathering the Change* released last year,” Mr Stanhope said.

“The 2008-09 Budget commits \$30.8 million over four years for tree plantings as part of the *One Million Trees* initiative, the urban forest replacement program and the reinvigoration of recreational areas. These trees will ensure that Canberra’s urban forests and bush setting are maintained, with over one million trees planted over ten years. The funding will also provide for the ten new forests as part of the Canberra international Arboretum and Gardens which has strong support from the local business community, and the international community with over 30 embassies and high commissions supporting the Arboretum visionary project.

“Sustainable living will also be a focus of this Budget, with \$1.7 million over two years to advance the East Lake sustainable urban renewal project. A partnership with the CSIRO, this will build on the established sustainability design funded in last year’s Budget to develop innovative applications of urban sustainability.

“A \$62.950 million investment in our public transport system over the next four years will also encourage and lead to more sustainable public transport options. Funding of \$49.5 million will be provided to purchase 100 new efficient, wheelchair accessible buses as part of the bus fleet replacement program; \$500,000 for new Park’n’Ride and Bike’n’Ride programs; and \$12.950 million for the implementation of ACTION’s new Network: 08. This should make public transport more accessible and attractive over the next four years, Mr Stanhope said.

“To lead by example, the ACT Government will also invest \$3 million this year to install energy-efficient street lights in Canberra, as well as providing half a million dollars for energy efficient housing and \$1.6 million over four years to help make our public schools carbon-neutral. By making our public services more energy efficient, we can become leaders in teaching Canberrans about the benefits of minimising our carbon footprint and in turn, make this a greener city.

“The Budget will also provide funding of \$70,000 for the Government’s contribution to the joint feasibility study into a large-scale solar power plant for the ACT.

“The 2008-09 Budget also provides \$2.5 million for a one-off grant to establish a Climate Change Adaptation Research Centre at the Australian National University. This funding will be matched by the ANU and deliver a leading research facility on climate change sciences.

“The ACT Government will also invest \$440,000 over four years to enable the implementation of strategic off-reserve conservation programs, improving the ability of high conservation areas to adapt to the effects of climate change.

“An additional \$1.273 million will be funded for sustainability programs. This funding will expand the ACT Government’s ongoing commitment to the key areas of water, energy, waste, climate change, sustainability and natural resource management.

“The existing walking trail at Mount Majura will also be restored at a cost of \$100,000. This will improve accessibility and safety for users of Mount Majura while addressing environmental erosion on the mountain.

“The ACT Government has also provided \$1 million for the predator-free sanctuary at Mulligans Flat. This will ensure the effective operation and maintenance of the purpose designed perimeter fence around the greater part of the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve. Ongoing maintenance will include regular boundary inspections, internal surveillance and eradication of foxes and cats and visitor liaison.

“The 2008-09 Budget also provides \$112,000 for the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability to continue the Grasslands studies. These studies will focus on the policy and legislative changes, conservation management principles and immediate actions required to ensure the protection and long-term sustainability of native lowland grasslands and the ecosystems they contain.

“The ACT Government will also deliver on its commitment to manage kangaroos in the ACT with \$155,000 provided for a new Kangaroo Action Plan to manage the impacts of over-abundant kangaroo populations in the ACT. The plan will provide ecological assessment and monitoring as well as measures to manage the kangaroo population in the long term.

“These initiatives funded in the 2008-09 Budget will ensure that the ACT Government continues to care and protect our native flora and fauna and can meet its carbon emissions targets, so that Canberra can remain one of the best cities in Australia to live.”

Statement ends

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