



ACT Government

2003-2004 BUDGET

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CANBERRA

CERTAINTY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The 2003-04 Budget was a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to a sustainable future for Canberra, Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, said today.

Mr Stanhope said the Budget contained significant funding and a major commitment to the environment, and provided important detail of the Government's urban development program for 2003-04 – both critical aspects of the city's future.

“A sustainable future for the Territory requires the leadership of Government to protect our environment and plan for this community's social and economic needs,” he said.

“Labor will provide that leadership.

“The Draft Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy, which I released last week, set the framework for the largest commitment of any ACT Government to the protection of ecosystems and corridors in our natural environment.

“My Government will place more than 1,000 hectares of land in Gooroo (750 hectares in East Gungahlin) and Callum Brae (300 hectares in the Jerrabomberra Valley) - land that might have been used for other purposes - into nature reserves to ensure our valuable yellow box/red gum woodlands and habitat for threatened plants and animals are protected in perpetuity. In addition, up to 240 hectares of woodland in Kinlyside are being studied to determine how best to protect the woodland and maintain connectivity between Hall and the Gungahlin Hills.

“We are increasing the amount of yellow box/red gum woodland going into reserve by a third.

“We have also committed a significant amount of money - \$1.671 million over 4 years - to manage these additional reserve areas. This includes the appointment of two additional field staff to assist in the establishment and ongoing management of the woodland reserves.

“This gives these areas a secure future and long-term certainty and is the most significant and substantial environmental commitment by any ACT administration.

“The Budget not only offers greater certainty to the environment but also to Canberrans wishing to purchase land.

“Through the Budget we are supporting the future release of land for residential development in the North Gungahlin suburbs of Forde and Bonner, and in East O'Malley,” said Mr Stanhope.

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“The incorporation of this land into the nature reserves means the community will be foregoing considerable revenue - \$275 million for Gooroo alone. This is a significant contribution by the Canberra community to conserve our precious woodlands.

The Chief Minister said the scientific information from the Draft Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy had been incorporated into the structure planning for North Gungahlin identifying key corridors of woodland.

Mr Stanhope emphasised that in making its outstanding commitment to the environment, the Government also needed to make a commitment to Canberra’s future growth and sustainability.

“The Government recognises that we need to develop strategies in which environmental and development responsibilities and opportunities successfully coexist.

“This Budget successfully strikes a balance between protecting our environment and providing for critical aspects of our social and economic future.

“We are offering full protection for the most strategically important yellow box/red gum woodland communities and have also agreed to release lands for urban development which are less strategically significant.

“While some people may wish to see all of the woodland trees protected, the Government is determined to take a long-term integrated and sustainable approach for Canberra and the region. This will ensure protection of these important areas for future generations.

“We believe the solution offered is one whereby both environmental and development needs can be met.

“Yet alternative development areas do still need to be explored, areas of less strategic environmental value as well as higher densities in existing centres and along transport corridors. The Canberra Spatial Plan is exploring these options now,” said Mr Stanhope.
Statement ends.